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ABSTRACT

This paper documents the operations and outcomes of the pilot test of the National Education Practices File, a program designed to identify information needs in education and develop a resources system for educators. This report is divided into four sections, the first three dealing with sources of information regarding the operation and outcomes of the pilot network. The first documents the development, maintenance, and support of 14 test sites; the second presents the evaluation of data collected through formal assessment procedures during the test; and the third presents an overview of case studies prepared by staff of six of the pilot sites. The final section contains a brief summary of the major findings of the pilot test and a presentation of the implications for the future development and operation of the Practices File. The appendices detail a preliminary survey of applicant sites, pilot site training sessions agenda, orientation and training agendas for Atlanta, evaluation forms, case study protocol, and case study reports. (Author/RAA)

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NATIONAL EDUCATION PRACTICES FILE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

PILOT TEST OPERATION AND EVALUATION

PRODUCT 2.7

January, 1980

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Preface

The National Education Practices File Development Project is part of an Education File Development Program sponsored by the Program on Dissemination and Improvement of Practice of the National Institute of Education. The File Development Program is designed to identify information needs in education and develop reference files to improve educator access to the needed information. One major outcome of the Program was the identification of a need for educational program and practice information targeted to practitioners.

In October, 1977, Bibliographic Retrieval Services, Inc., (BRS) was awarded a contract to develop design specifications for a National Education Practices File. The design period (Phase I) focused on the collection and documentation of ideas and suggestions from the field regarding various file features including content, acquisitions, selection, source availability, user products and services and the organization for operating the File. A review of related information products was undertaken to identify what similar files and services existed. Based on this study, and the advice of a Project Advisory Committee, comprised of dissemination specialists and educators at all levels, BRS provided NIE with a set of alternatives for further design work and possible development. A feasibility analysis of these options resulted in the recommendation of a file design for testing. This design was completed and submitted to NIE in June, 1978.

In July of that year, BRS was awarded a second contract to develop and test a Practices File based on the approved design specifications. The test file contained approximately two thousand records of programs and practices from the National Diffusion Network, state ESEA, Title IV-C programs, the San Mateo

Educational Resources Center, and numerous other sources. The File was pilot-tested for six months (mid-May through mid-November, 1979) in fourteen sites throughout the Country, including state education agencies (Alaska, Illinois and Texas), regional exchanges (NWREL and SEDL), intermediate service agencies (Wayne County, Michigan; San Mateo County, California), teacher centers (Mid-Coast - Camden, Maine, The Exchange - Minneapolis), an ERIC Clearinghouse (Math, Science and Environmental - Ohio State), an information broker (Educational Resources Library, National Institute of Education), a library network (University of Missouri), and large, urban school districts (Atlanta and Washington, D.C.). The Phase II activities are scheduled to conclude in February, 1980.

Three major documents were produced as a result of Phase I activities:

- Preliminary Design Feature Alternatives and Discussion of Their Feasibility for a National Educational Practices File (March, 1978) presented a delineation and an analysis of three major design alternatives for the File.
- Education Practices File Design (June, 1978) presented detailed specifications for the development and operation of the design alternative selected by NIE.
- Revised Phase II Plan for the National Education Practices File Development Project (June, 1978) contained a plan for pilot testing and evaluating the File and a plan for operating a Practices File clearinghouse operation.

Major reports prepared during Phase II of the File Development Project include:

- Procedures Documentation (Janaury, 1980) contains comprehensive documentation of the specifications and operations of procedures for maintaining and updating the File.

- Pilot Test Operation and Evaluation (January, 1980) contains a detailed description of the development and operation of the network of pilot test sites over the six-month test period. Evaluation of the site operations and of clients' initial assessments of the File are also presented.
- Implementation and Management Plan for Future Expansion of the National Education Practices File (January, 1980) contains a detailed plan for managing the File in an operation mode. The plan is based on results of the pilot test and specifies objectives, functions and organizational and operational structures for the management of the File.

The outcomes of these activities and products will assist the National Institute of Education in developing and maintaining a resource system targeted to the information needs of practitioners and to supporting educational practice improvement efforts.

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Acknowledgements

Undertaking so complex a project inevitably requires the cooperation and collaboration of many individuals, groups and organizations. Each of our accomplishments is supported by many people throughout the Country and we extend our sincere thanks to all.

We owe special thanks to the pilot site managers and staff. We know that we received much more than we gave in advice and support. Without their extra efforts undertaken in using and critiquing the File, it would not be possible to provide any reasonable plan for further development and expansion.

We are also grateful for the guidance provided by our Project Advisory Council members: Edward Ball, Harper and Row Publishers; Rodney Barth, Illinois Office of Education; Ted Brandhorst, ERIC Facility; Donald Ely, ERIC Clearinghouse for Information Resources; George French, Philadelphia School System; Thomas Hartsig, Macomb Intermediate School District; Kenneth Komoski, Educational Products Information Exchange; Diane Lassman, The Exchange Teacher Center; Diane MacIntyre, Far West Laboratory; Joel Magisos, National Center for Research in Vocational Education; Harry Osgood, Area Cooperative Educational Service Center; and Frank Thompson, ECOS Training Institute.

We acknowledge with special thanks the support and advice of NIE staff, particularly our project monitors Mollie McAdams and Jacques Nacson. The Internal Advisory Group members provided timely guidance and advice. For their help we thank Robert Chesley, John Coulson, Jerry Fletcher, Sue Klein, Charles Missar, Jon Schaffarzick, and Lou Walker. Also within NIE, we recognize the leadership provided to this effort by Charles Hoover and Michael Kane.

Finally, we recognize the consultants who have assisted us in various stages of the design and pilot test work. Carolyn Trohoski and Richard Brickley provided essential research and design support; Ronald Sczcypkowski and Ann Pollinger conducted the pilot test evaluation activities; and Richard Lavin and Jean Sanders managed the pilot operation. Their splendid work was invaluable, as was their team spirit. Charles Mojkowski provided extensive and invaluable conceptual and operational support to the Project, and Barbara Christie assisted with the development of the printed products.

Within BRS, several staff are worthy of commendation. Robert Hamilton headed the technical team responsible for the computer processing; Jeff Westcott developed and maintained the online user data-collection system; Edward Hancock, Barbara Derrick and Marian Hasslacher managed the clearinghouse operation, and Lillian Greco coordinated the completion of all project reports.

To all those cited above, we extend our warm regards for your contributions.

Gregory Benson, Jr.
Project Director

Ronald Quake
President
BRS, Inc.

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to document the operations and outcomes of the pilot test of the National Education Practices File conducted for six months (mid-May through mid-November, 1979) in fourteen sites throughout the Country, including state education agencies (Alaska, Illinois, and Texas), regional exchanges (NWREL and SEDL), intermediate service agencies (Wayne County, Michigan; San Mateo County, California), teacher centers (Mid-Coast - Camden, Maine; the Exchange - Minneapolis), and ERIC Clearinghouse (Math, Science and Environmental - Ohio State), an information broker (Educational Resources Library, National Institute of Education), a library network (University of Missouri), and large urban school districts (Atlanta and Washington, D.C.).

This report is divided into four sections, the first three dealing with sources of information regarding the operations and outcomes of the pilot network. Section 2.7.1 documents the development, maintenance and support of the network of fourteen sites. Section 2.7.2 presents the evaluation data collected through formal assessment procedures during the test. The Third section (2.7.3) presents an overview of case studies prepared by the staff of six of the pilot sites. The final section (2.7.4) contains a brief summary of the major findings of the pilot test and a presentation of implications for the future development and operation of the Practices File.

2.7.1 PILOT NETWORK OPERATIONS

A. PURPOSE OF THE PILOT TEST

This pilot test was designed as an intensive try-out of the preliminary form of the Education Practices File to provide the basis for modifications through evaluation by a sample of potential users. During the pilot test, the File's feasibility was examined in terms of feedback and performance of a small, but representative group of users through primary access sites. The major objectives of the pilot test were:

1. To obtain professional/practitioner reactions to the dissemination of the File (programs and practices);
2. To seek options and suggestions regarding usefulness of the File, its ease of use/accessibility, and its relative worth in terms of other available access channels.

The purpose of the pilot test was summed up by a series of questions:

1. What difference will the File make if it is added to the current holdings of the test sites?
2. What can reasonably be expected if the File is expanded over the next several years and what modifications are suggested?
3. What will happen at the test sites that would not have happened in the absence of the File?
4. What effects, if any, are determined as a result of the placement of the File in a test site?
    - Increase the level of resource use
    - Alters the resource mix (file options)
    - Affects the existing search and negotiation process
    - Potential for impacting the practice level of the school
5. What are the costs of this system (direct) as compared to other ERIC-like information systems?
6. Is the language of the Practices File easily understood by the user/practitioner?

The proposed pilot test, originally limited by NIE's RFP to only three months, was actually carried out over a period of nine months.

Phase I Selection and Training	3 Months
Phase II Implementation	6 Months

B. SELECTION OF SITES

Since the RFP target-audience categories specified teachers, principals, SEA staff, etc. (corresponding to categories identified in the SDC "Requirement Study"), a matrix sampling approach was used for site selection. The following agency categories were suggested to be represented in the field test network: Local Education Agency, Intermediate Service Agency, State Education Agency, Regional Exchange, Teacher Center, Library and Clearinghouse. This represented approximately seven types of agencies, each with their respective clientele as major target groups. The category of urban school district was added to the pilot test network in May, 1979 to complement the existing network of sites.

Three criteria emerged from discussions with NIE staff and with the Project Advisory Group:

1. Existence of an established information service capability;
2. Existence of a delivery network of intermediaries or some other routine mechanism for receiving and negotiating information requests; and
3. Service delivery to a breadth of target groups representing educational practitioners.

Prospective sites submitted a brief capability statement addressing these items and providing background on their sites as well as demographic information relative to their location, addresses, telephone numbers, and names of key personnel.

The funding level for the pilot test limited the number of sites at twelve, each representative of one or more of the educational agency types. Project personnel proceeded with site selection during the Fall of 1978 by:

1. reviewing the criteria for selection of field test sites;
2. reviewing previously received communications from agencies interested in becoming pilot sites;
3. contacting potential sites in categories where there were no applicant agencies;
4. developing a tentative list of field sites for project staff review; and
5. preparing initial drafts of letters to be sent to potential sites.

Letters of interest, which had been submitted from a variety of organizations around the country were reviewed in light of these criteria and their willingness to participate in evaluation activities. Potential sites were asked to complete a Site Profile that would describe their current operations and organizational setting and responded to the following three areas:

1. Current Operations
   - Facilities
   - Personnel
   - Current Programs
   - Resource Information Bank
2. Linkages
   - Linkage to Resources
   - Linkage to Clients
   - Internal Linkage within the Organization
3. Problem-Solving and Support-Service Strategies
   - Models
   - Style
   - Organization (private/public, what is governmental relationship)

This information gathered from each potential site was used to assist in the final selection and documentation of their representativeness. Twenty-five nominations of prospective test sites were received by BRS.

Project staff met to review the tentative site listing and contacted each site, by mail and by telephone, to gather additional information. After selection by the project staff and review by the NIE project monitor, the final list of sites was prepared and each agency was notified of acceptance. Figure 1 presents the list of twelve sites originally selected for participation in the pilot test (the two urban sites were added later).

FIGURE 1

National Education Practices File
Project Sites

Site Categories	Represents	Site Selected
2 Regional Exchanges	7 Multistate Regional Exchanges	• Southwest Lab. • Northwest Lab.
2 State Education Agencies	33 State Capacity Building Projects (SEA-based with resource & linkage components)	• Illinois • Texas • Alaska
2 Intermediate Service Agencies	Substate information and service centers; county & intermediate agencies	• Wayne County, Mich. • San Mateo, Calif.
ERIC Clearinghouse	16 ERIC Clearinghouses	• Ohio SMEAC/ERIC
Information Broker	(State-based regional information material services)	• NIE/ERC
Homogeneous	American Association of Colleges, Professional Associations, CSSO	• University of Missouri-Kansas City Libraries (4 Library Network)
2 Teacher Centers	Colleges and Universities LEA - School District	• Minneapolis, Minn. • Camden, Maine

Urban Site Selection

Shortly after site selection and orientation, the Urban Task Force within NIE requested that two large urban districts be added to the pilot test network. The Task Force is an NIE-wide group established to investigate ways in which the Institute can develop stronger collaborative relationships with large urban districts. Task Force members saw the Practices File as an opportunity to involve urban districts in an important Institute effort. BRS project staff saw it as an opportunity to gain a new and valuable perspective on the test file. The Task Force provided the supplemental funds necessary to support the participation of two urban sites in the pilot test.

In May, 1979, in response to the request of the Urban Task Force, BRS project staff initiated the process of selecting the two urban sites to participate in the pilot test of the Practices File. The following criteria were established to guide the selection:

- An urban site in a principal city
- Located in areas not served by the previously selected twelve pilot test sites
- Engaged in school improvement programs, as evidenced by administrative organization or plans for educational improvement
- Possessing some dissemination capacity as evidenced by organizational structure and functions that address information utilization and application
- Extending a commitment to provide the necessary support services for operation and maintenance of the test

Using the Rand McNally (1974 edition) list of "Principal World Cities," forty-seven U.S. urban areas with a population of more than 250,000 were identified. In the East and Southeast (areas not covered by the previously selected sites), Atlanta, Boston, Dade County and Washington, D.C. were identified as potential sites. Preliminary information on Atlanta and Washington indicated that formal school improvement efforts were under way and that some level of dissemination capacity was in place. In Washington, a Special Purpose Dissemination Project was linked at the Central Office level to school-based improvement activities. In Atlanta, research associates and assistants work with principals, staff and area resource teachers in formulating corrective action plans for addressing identified needs.

Based on the preliminary identification, further information was collected through the completion of a Site Profile questionnaire (Appendix A), and through in-person and telephone interviews. This information confirmed the preliminary identification and BRS recommended to NIE the selection of Atlanta and Washington as pilot test sites. Following NIE approval, service agreements were drawn up with each site, specifying the requirements for each site and the resources and services to be provided by BRS.

C. DESCRIPTION OF SITES

Each pilot test site was an autonomous information/service center with delivery functions designed to facilitate access to the Practices File for major client groups. Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of each primary client group served by sites prior to the pilot test implementation.

Although not a criteria for site selection, many of the agencies were actively involved in other dissemination activities. This resulted in a comprehensive pilot test network which is representative of varying levels of dissemination capacity (see Figure 3). The map in Figure 4 shows the geographic dispersion of the sites. Additionally, a thumbnail sketch is provided, describing the service delivery capacity for each primary site.

Figure 2

Audiences/Clients of the Primary Sites

Teachers	30 %
SEA	13
Administrators	12
Site Administrators (Linkers, Etc.)	10
Schools/LEAs	8
Students/Parents	8
Other Practitioners	6
In-house (Staff)	6
Other	4
Policy Boards	3
	100%

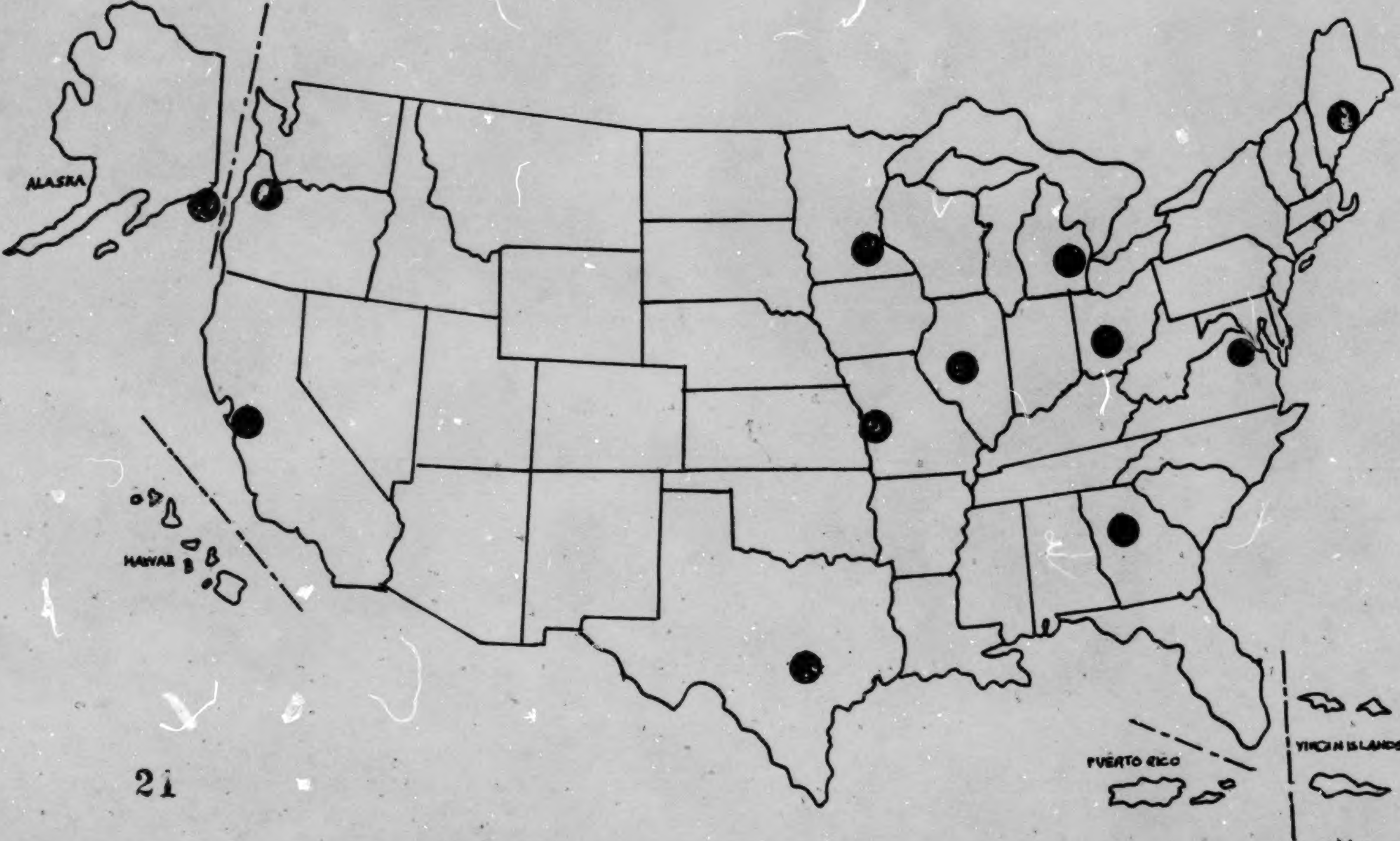
Figure 3

Test Site Involvement in Related Dissemination Activities

	Teacher Center	Capacity Building	Tab	State File Development	NDN	RDU/RDX
Alaska (SEA)		X		X		
California (ISA)				X		
Illinois (SEA)		X		X		
Maine (TC)	X			X		
Michigan (ISA)				X		
Minnesota (TC)	X		X		X	RDU
Ohio (ERIC CH)						RDX
Oregon (RX)				X		RDX
Texas (RX)						RDX
Texas (SEA)		X		X	X	

Figure 4

NATIONAL EDUCATION PRACTICES FILE PILOT TEST NETWORK


ALASKA
HAWAII
PUERTO RICO
VIRGIN ISLANDS

Category: **Regional Educational Laboratory**

N.W. Regional Educational Laboratory
710 S.W. Second Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97203

The Information Center/Library of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory acts as a research library, information linking point, and educational materials dissemination unit. It houses the ERIC collection of microfiche and indexes; maintains special collections in career education, competency-based education, and educational evaluation; and provides the indexed/cataloged NWRX Educational Materials Collection. Staff are professional, educational information specialists, strongly involved with local and regional information agencies, and working closely with the Lab's Dissemination Program.

Any Laboratory contracts that relate to instructional materials or educational processes development acquire their materials through the Information Center, where they are catalogued and indexed: Collections such as the Adult Education, Competency-Based Education, Career Education and Sex-fair Materials are examples.

SEDL/RX
211 East 7th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

The SEDL Regional Exchange now serves six states with the recent inclusion of Mississippi to the region. The Regional Exchange contracts with the Texas CITE Resource Center for information services for its other five states. The SEDL/RX maintains a resource center of 600 titles in the basic skills, competency-based education and information dissemination; and a regional file of reading programs. Files include SEA publications of program information and brochures and abstracts of individual programs. A regional reading file is in the planning stage. The regional exchange is designed as a coordinating, brokering, liaison office with a collection of manual files that include organization, programs, agency and publication information.

The SEDL/RX has also developed a resource center of printed materials that includes approximately 600 titles. Main emphasis for this collection are research syntheses in reading, math, competency-based education; NIE publications; SEA publications (from 5 states); and recently acquired materials in special education and bilingual education.

Category: ERIC Clearinghouse

ERIC/SMEAC
1200 Chambers Road, Room 310
Columbus, Ohio 43212

Ohio--An ERIC Clearinghouse (SMEAC) that performs several hundred searches per month. Sixty percent of their clients are teachers. SMEAC has its own local clearinghouse files as well as SMEAC products. Major files include ERIC (RIE & CIJE), and partitions of ERIC, indexed local files, and results of surveys.

The Clearinghouse searches about 21 or 22 files on a periodic basis to identify materials to obtain for files and data bases.

Six staff members include three Associate Directors, in content areas, 1 Computer Services Specialist, 1 Acquisition Specialist, 1 Publication Assistant as well as two additional Processing Staff. Not all are ERIC staff; several are on special projects.

Category: SEAs

Illinois Office of Education
100 North First Street
Springfield, Illinois 62777

Illinois RDN provides services in the form of searches, inservice on using resources, analyzing resources, etc. Resource and Dissemination Network has an extensive Capacity Building project; presently undergoing state file development and special packaging of information. The Illinois Resource File consists of NDN programs, Title IV and Title I exemplary programs and promising practices from schools and communities throughout the state. The file also has a consultant portion with 888 consultants now listed.

Alaska Department of Education
Pouch F - State Office Building
Juneau, Alaska 99811

The Division of Library Services and the Division of Education Support offer Capacity Building Seminars and affiliate with Alaska Regional Resource Center (RRC & LEAs). These use the Alaska Knowledge Base extensively and search ERIC, NICSEM/NIMIS and other data bases. Promising technologies are used in Educational Telecommunications for Alaska, a project centered around a statewide computer network. This project links every school district and resource center to each other and to the Department of Education via satellite.

Category: SEAs - continued

Texas Education Agency
CITE Resource Center
Southwest Tower, 211 East 7th
Austin, Texas 78701

CITE is a three-part coordinated dissemination system, incorporating the Texas Diffusion Network (NDN), Demonstration Schools Network (state-validated programs), and the CITE Resource Center (information services). They search KTO (ASCD), Xerox, and CDL for curriculum materials, in addition to SEA documents. They use NDN and NIE catalogs, and state-validated collections for practice/program evaluation. Computer search in addition to ERIC includes the ECER, AGRICOLA, MESH, and State Files. Collections include approximately 1,500 monographs, 50 periodicals, 5,000 fugitive pieces, and 4 microfiche collections (excluding ERIC). Dissemination is primarily via individualized information packets through the network, and secondarily through prepared publications.

Category: Teacher Centers

The Exchange at the Teacher Center
166 Peik Hall -- University of Minnesota
159 Pillsbury Drive S.E.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

Minnesota Teacher Center--Staff at the Exchange possess a variety of dissemination skills. They also operate a State Facilitator Project (NDN) for Southeast Minnesota and other dissemination projects offering:

- Technical assistance
- A field site for RDU

They maintain files of material from most NDN funded D/D projects and for many nonfunded, but JDRP-approved and Minnesota-Validated programs. They search resource files of materials for NDN funded programs when more detailed information is required through manual procedures and were in the process of installing computer search capability for NDN projects and Minnesota-Validated Projects when selected as a pilot site.

Mid-Coast Teacher Center
Box 860
Camden, Maine 04843

An HEW-funded teacher center, funded in September 1978, Maine offers in-service teacher education using "promising" practices. The center searches out practices relative to teacher-perceived needs. The policy Board has allotted funds for the development of a regional file. They also search Council for Exceptional Children files, NDN practices files, and CBRU (Computer-Based Resource Units).

Mid-Coast Teacher Center - continued

They have one CRT, a printer and a fulltime searcher trained by BRS. A secretary and library-aide clerk assist in dissemination. The Center publishes a monthly newsletter reaching 450-500 teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals and is able to disseminate through the Maine State Department of Education.

Category: Intermediate State Agency (ISA)

Wayne County Intermediate School District
Professional Resource Center--Information Services
33500 Van Born Road
Wayne, Michigan 48184

An intermediate agency serving the metropolitan, Detroit area, Wayne County Intermediate School District has pioneered Project VALUE to identify state-exemplary programs. They have extensive staff operation, field services and support activities for information utilization. They maintain complete in-house reference and materials collections, and a reference station at Wayne State University Libraries.

Their Human Services Network is extensive. They have approximately thirty-five professional and support staff in the Wayne County Professional Resource Network. About one-third devote full time to information storage and retrieval. Wayne County has full data base access via computer and has developed a Regional Information Exchange, State Library.

San Mateo Educational Resource Center
333 Main Street
Redwood City, California 94063

Under contract with state and local education agencies, SMERC provides packages of educational information to educators in 24 California Counties, 7 State Offices of Education, and to several other agencies under special contract. Its primary source of information is ERIC, supplemented by California curriculum materials and other fugitive documents.

They have developed two major files complementary to ERIC. These are California Curriculum Materials (CM), and FIDO (Fugitive Information Data Organizer) collection (ID).

SMERC provides educational information to subscribing agencies who sign a yearly contract, the cost of which is usually based on average daily enrollment. Any educator within that agency may make an unlimited number of requests for information during that contract year.

Category: Urban

D. C. Public Schools
1013 Presidential Building
415 12th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Washington, D.C. Public Schools has an organizational structure at the central office level and the Special Purpose Dissemination Project. They search the Curriculum Materials Clearinghouse Index and Briefs and Microfiche, CEDAR catalog, and ALERT manually and ERIC, Exceptional Child, SCI Search and Excerpta, Medica, by computer.

The Research Information Center was organized in 1969 and has had computer retrieval capability for all but 2 or 3 years of the time. The Special Purpose Grant and capacity building grant provided further dissemination activities including the educational extension agents (linkers) to bridge the gap between research and practitioners.

Atlanta Public Schools
Research, Evaluation and Data Processing Division
224 Central Avenue, S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Atlanta has major ongoing efforts in a longitudinal case study of pupil achievement as well as a research support staff employing research assistants and research associates.

Atlanta maintains a support service system for school improvement efforts and a linkage network within their respective schools. The test site is managed by the Research Evaluation and Data Processing Division.

Category: Library

University of Missouri-Kansas City
University Libraries
Kansas City, Missouri 64110

Missouri--A two-state metropolitan area Library Extension service network. Each library provides information and reference services. There are 8 search-site libraries in Kansas and Missouri (public libraries and College/University). Site will serve 20 LEAs through the School of Education at U.M.K.

A network for data base searching through libraries of all types is in the bi-state greater Kansas City area. There are eight search site libraries which together serve 20 LEAs, several programs of teacher education (including masters and doctoral programs at the University of Missouri-Kansas City), and numerous other educational programs and organizations.

D. SITE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The scope of the pilot test, with computer retrieval access at each of fourteen network nodes, provided a set of programs and practices to be disseminated to end users. The pilot test was intended to examine the standardized formats developed by BRS for the Practices File and result in recommendation for modifications. The File was viewed as a resource complementary to existing holdings and search activities of the pilot test sites. Test sites were expected to build a greater two-way communication between its organization and clients while extending its search and outreach activities through the network capability.

Coordination activities for the pilot test were intended to maximize the usefulness of evaluative data and feedback gathered from sites in planning for full implementation of the File and its operational characteristics.

Three major activities comprised this phase of the pilot test:

1. Implementing search services in the test sites;
2. Training test site staff in the appropriate use of the File;
3. Providing ongoing technical assistance throughout the pilot test period.

Following the selection of sites, a letter of agreement was drawn up between each site and BRS to formalize the commitment of each party. The only restrictions placed on the use of the File were that each site would be limited to a six month use (approximately 15 hours per month), and agree to provide feedback data on use of the File. Site strategies for this operational pilot test were written into service agreements.

The BRS/Pilot Site Agreement was finalized and mailed to each site during February, 1979 (to the urban sites in July). This agreement notified sites that they were part of a network provided with exclusive, routine access to the test version of the Practices File.

The purpose of the site agreement was to obtain cooperation from each site for the service pilot test as follows:

1. Test the Education Practices File with their constituents through their regular service delivery;
2. Attend the two-day BRS training session and train relevant personnel in the system mechanics;
3. Conduct the pilot test and provide evaluation and feedback;
4. Promote awareness of the File through regular dissemination channels or specialized awareness activities.

In return, the Education Practices File Development Project would provide:

1. National orientation sessions and training (travel and expenses for one person from each pilot site);
2. On-site visitation to pilot sites as necessary.
3. Computer time and related communications and off-line services to sites during the pilot test;
4. Development of the necessary forms for collecting data relating to the evaluation;
5. Telephone communication from BRS and field test sites as necessary;
6. Prototype awareness materials for use by the sites;
7. Technical assistance to the site as needed.

As part of the project there were a number of functions and expectations that guided the activities in each of the primary sites. These role expectations and functions are outlined in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Role Expectations And Functions of Test Sites

Expectations:

1. Increase Public Awareness Of The Existence Of Educational Practices File And Source Documents
   - Provide Publicity, Awareness, Broadcast Dissemination Spread Of Information
2. Increase The Access To And The Utilization Of The File For Existing And Potential Users (Clients)
3. Provide Reports And Maintain Logs, Records, And Information Related To Activities And Utilization Of The File At The Primary Site
4. Provide Reports About Needs That Will Enable Project Staff To Make Useful Modifications Relative To Potential File Expansion (E.G., Recommendations On File Content And Process)

Functions:

1. Maintain On-Line Access To File (Resources)
2. Information-Giving--Providing Information About Program
   - Provide Accurate, Up-To-Date Information About The Education Practices File Development Project
3. Provide Referrals To Agencies For Those Inquirers Who Need:
   - Location Of Source Document
   - Identification Of Resource For In-service Training
   - Referral To Agencies
4. Conduct Search Appraisal Activities And Follow-Up For Data Collection

E. ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

To facilitate use of the File and to maximize the usefulness of the evaluative date and feedback gathered from the sites in using the File, a major emphasis was placed on orientation and training. In the case of Atlanta, Georgia, this included installation as well as implementation assistance. For these purposes, a two-day seminar was conducted in April, 1979 in Louisville, Kentucky. (Because of the delay in selecting the urban sites, separate orientation and training sessions were conducted.)

Those test sites having access to the ERIC data base were provided with orientation on the Practices File and its use. Those service facilities not familiar with BRS system retrieval were provided with specific training in search procedures.

Pilot test-site personnel were oriented and trained for using the Education Practices File in accordance with procedures developed for the project. Despite the fact that the Practices File was designed using the ERIC system as a foundation, there are several new elements that required a thorough technical training workshop (see agenda in Appendix B). There were three major purposes for the two-day seminar:

- To provide orientation to the Practices File
- To offer technical training in the BRS retrieval system
- To describe pilot test management and evaluation activities

The BRS project staff provided access to content information about the File through the training experiences and demonstrations. The BRS manual served as the basis for the two-day training session. The manual included general procedures as well as file-specific information training aids.

The BRS manual contained:

- General information on the File Development Project
- Description of File content
- Pilot test limitations
- Instructions for on-line entry of user profile information
- Evaluation forms
- List of all pilot sites
- Project contact phone numbers for general information or technical assistance

An orientation/strategy session provided suggestions and assistance to the pilot site personnel in the creation of awareness materials and provided training to information searchers regarding specific features of the Practices File.

Training packet development and other activities to support the seminars and in-field activities were reviewed for each site manager to enable him/her to train additional key personnel in his/her agency. These items included preparing briefings and conference presentations, and preparation of brochures and other literature for outreach to clients.

During the training session, discussion period provided for site information exchange. Each participant described particular strategies used that would result in improved service delivery with the Practices File. These included supporting, servicing and delivering information used locally, or in some cases regionally. The areas represented included:

- Techniques for contacting and motivating potential program file users
- Liaisons with secondary or affiliated sites or other intermediate agencies and professional associations
- Carrying the message to school consumers and practitioners (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, etc.)
- Defining target users

Discussion also centered around the development of vehicles for File and service promotion and awareness. Products to implement this technical assistance component were reviewed in draft form so that participants could make suggestions.

- Descriptive fliers, brochures, articles, etc.
- User products
- Other implementation aids as necessary (e.g., standardized search form)

Further information was provided at the Louisville seminar to familiarize site managers with the evaluative activities, and the logs and forms necessary to monitor the pilot test. Major topics covered during this agenda item included:

- Processing activities -- user profile
- Search conduct -- logging procedures
- User appraisal format
- Monthly reporting formats and evaluation activities at the site

Urban Training

The training sessions for Atlanta Public Schools took a slightly different focus. The budget amendment included funds for the installation of an information service (within the districts administrative and research units) where there had been no such delivery capability.

Technical support was provided to initiate the start-up phase of the pilot test so that all working relationships could be arranged for the Fall and the start of the school year. Technical assistance and start-up activities began with the installation of a terminal in Atlanta, and the identification and training of personnel in both Atlanta and Washington, D.C., in the use of the BRS system. Technical training was provided to the two urban sites in August and early September by BRS service representatives.

Each site was contacted through personal interviews and on-site visits regarding kinds of assistance needed to gain early access to the Practices File. Further assessments of the service capacity continued as installation progressed and a two-day training session was prepared in cooperation with Atlanta Public Schools and presented to twenty-five of their staff members on September, 25 and 26, 1979 (see training agenda in Appendix C). The purpose of the training session was to indicate how the File could be used by the research assistants and associates in meeting needs and developing programs under the theme: "Local School Educational Improvement". Suggestions for the Atlanta pilot test were made at these sessions with implementation steps, follow-up and extended support to be provided as part of the service agreement.

The major activities with Atlanta Public Schools personnel during the two-day seminar included implementation and skill development for knowledge application. A search form was designed with the search personnel that was a composite of forms used at two other sites, along with specific questions prepared by the Atlanta searcher. This form served as the initial request mechanism for research associates and staff to access the File.

Following a general orientation and overview of the File, specific "linking" and problem-solving suggestions were derived for implementation with the City School staff as well as central administrative research activities. Discussion focused on how specific research associates might use the File in field work with their respective schools in their assigned projects such as Title I, basic skills and the like.

Specific components of the "linking" role were examined in light of the research assistant's job description: i.e., negotiation, retrieval, and evaluation.

Examples illustrative of File content were used in these discussions. Each research assistant completed a search request form and submitted this to the searcher at the terminal. Searchers were actually able to conduct computer searches based upon issues and concerns directly related to needs of the Atlanta Public Schools.

F. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

Test sites were asked to use and evaluate the operations of the File and they cooperated with the project staff to invite users (teachers, superintendents, principals, and other instructional staff as well as policy-makers, agency staff and other practitioners) to use the File and to offer feedback. Educational practitioners were able to request searches from the Education Practices File by contracting a test site and negotiating a computer search. The result of the computer search was a printout that contained the citation(s) of all items in the Education Practices File that satisfied the search requirements. A User Search Appraisal Form accompanied each search response.

Based upon considerations derived from the discussions at the Louisville sessions, modifications were made in the User Search Profile. The information questions were streamlined following the Louisville seminar to facilitate the collection of the essential information. User Profile Information was entered online for each user throughout the pilot test period and matched up later with the evaluative forms. A search ID number was assigned to each user to allow for this match-up to occur. Additionally, in response to suggestions made at the training session in Louisville, the order of the BRS File citation elements was rearranged on the printout and copies were forwarded to all sites. These modifications and clarifications to the forms and procedures were communicated to the sites through direct mailings from the BRS central headquarters, the Evaluation office, or the Merrimack Education Center, as appropriate.

The Northwest Lab information services staff developed a unique format for displaying the User Profile Information as the searcher worked at the terminal. This was shared with all sites. Other forms exchanged among sites included:

- Cover letters mailed with searches
- Request forms for ordering SMERC microfiche
- Special brochures, newsletters, and articles

Early months of the pilot test were consumed with internal operations and installation. Because of the time of year (summer), sites used the initial months for further training of key agency personnel. Internal preparation activities were conducted during the start-up, and actual services to clients increased as the school year got under way.

An extensive variety of awareness activities was conducted between June and November, 1979, by the pilot sites. Newsletters, face-to-face presentations and special flyers were used, as were journal articles. Fact sheets and mini-information packages were developed to go out with searches. BRS prepared a full service brochure and the Northwest Lab modified a draft of an early Practices File brochure which was adapted by three pilot sites.

Project staff concentrated on the elements of the service agreements that were established with the primary sites and on assisting the primary sites in technical and programmatic activities. Further monitoring activities, including monthly reporting formats, are described in Section 2.7.2 of this report. Sites were provided ongoing "trouble-shooting" assistance from various members of the BRS project staff. Monthly management reports were reviewed to guide technical assistance activities and to record and resolve problems and issues related to the use of the File. Technical assistance emphasized operational problems and constraints as well as ways to maximize benefits to the sites and their respective clients.

On-site visits by project staff provided the opportunity to elicit critical incidents, collect implementation scenarios, and identify critical issues raised in earlier training conferences or telephone discussion for problem analysis. These services made it possible to assist the test sites from a distance, as did the telecommunications capability for "electronic mail" via the terminal which was used frequently for site-to-project and internal-project communication.

Information exchange among and between sites as well as contact with project staff members allowed discussions on:

- Information search outcomes and specific procedures
- Perceived needs and problem analysis
- Implementation and monitoring of results

Project pilot sites were encouraged to provide feedback in such areas as:

- Utility of products
- Staff training and orientation at their site

Project staff interacted with pilot site staff, as appropriate, for specific questions. Subsequent contacts were made by phone or in person by staff visits with site personnel.

Further technical assistance and support services were provided in such areas as the following:

1. Assisting sites in the design of forms for search request. This was necessary in some sites where extensive experience in searching was not evident.

2. Assisting in developing relationships between a Practices File site and other agencies operating information services within their state or nearby states.

3. Reducing overlap where two or three sites would be disseminating into the same area. This was noted in particular in the Northwest area.

4. Sharing public relations or awareness materials with sites where materials were requested.

5. Linking with other projects in the Pilot Site Network. Many times this occurred through "electronic mail" entries made on-line via their terminals.

6. Clarification of some of the evaluation questions. Clients of the respective pilot sites had difficulty judging the File on the basis of its limited content. It was difficult for clients to understand that the File was in a developmental process and not an operational File, although awareness materials pointed out the difference.

During the limited pilot test period, the Education Practices File sites were requested to note any problems and constraints that were occurring in the period of the field test. Overall, sites did not experience difficulty in utilizing the File, primarily because of their past experience in actual dissemination of information at their sites through other ERIC-like files. However, there were suggestions noted that could result in future improvements in the utility and impact of the Education Practices File. These comments were forwarded to the project evaluator and are reported in Section 2.7.2.

Responses to queries from the sites during the pilot test were through the medium of telephone, electronic mail, newsletters that were sent out periodically exchanging ideas, as well as through on-site visits during the pilot test period. Issues that developed at the various sites were of two categories: first, those dealing with the File--although only a few problems were indicated in that area. In the second set were those arising from the general conditions of operations at respective sites. In the latter case, there were situations of staff turnover following the training sessions held in April.

The major problem cited by the pilot test-site staff was that of the timing and length of test period. The test period began in May, 1979 and continued until mid-November, 1979. This short period of time was interrupted by the summer months and a one-month experimentation period to allow sites to become accustomed to the File. For all practical purposes, the major part of the field test and the greatest amount of activity occurred in the months of September, October and November (see Section 2.7.2 for a delineation of site usage statistics).

A second major concern expressed by Practices File test-site staff was the size of the File, with indications that the File was not large enough to permit ongoing responses to clients. However, files were searched together with ERIC and other data bases which added to the yield of documents.

Overall, the problems or issues that surfaced during the pilot test were very few, given the major constraint of a limited test period and a limited File scope. Most sites were able to provide an excellent link to the use of a National Practices File within a given dissemination setting. Site personnel participating in the study, although reporting information through evaluation forms and communication, represent an extremely valuable resource for evaluating the potential of the National Practices File. It would have been extremely useful to invite these participants to a second seminar meeting but budget funds were not available for this purpose. Although various clients have provided information through the evaluation search appraisal forms, the managers operating at the sites represent, as a group, people dealing directly with their information center and the dissemination of information to their clients. Their heavy usage of the File, especially in the latter months of the field test, gave evidence of their desire to make use of the limited, but potentially valuable, Practices File.

2.7.2 PILOT TEST EVALUATION RESULTS

A. EVALUATION PLAN

As detailed in the amended Phase II proposal (product 1.7/1.8) submitted to NIE at the end of Phase I, the evaluation effort undertaken during the pilot test focused on two primary issues: the technical feasibility of the Practices File for use in information sites throughout the country, and the utility of the File in aiding site personnel to serve the information needs of their clients. From the onset of the pilot test phase, another essential evaluation issue was felt to be the utility of the Practices File for the ultimate user, the educational practitioner. However, because of the limited pilot test period as well as the budgetary restrictions on evaluation activities, it was recognized that this issue could not be explored adequately at the present time. The pilot test evaluation did incorporate an initial step in this direction, attempting to ascertain user's reactions immediately following receipt of File search results.

The data obtained through the pilot test evaluation are here summarized in two major sections. The first contains the feedback which was obtained from the fourteen pilot sites, focusing on the two broad issues outlined above. The second section presents a summary of reactions to Practices File search results, which were received directly from educational practitioners.

Before turning to these data, however, it should be very clearly noted that, by design, the scope of the Phase II evaluation was quite restricted, involving a fairly narrow research design and a limited sample. Accordingly, the information here presented is primarily descriptive in nature and caution should be exercised in drawing from conclusions regarding the feasibility and utility of the File in circumstances other than those specifically explored and here reported. Certainly, much more extensive development and evaluation will be required in order to ascertain with certainty the value of a complete Practices File for all types of information centers and their clientele. The evaluation findings which follow this should be interpreted as suggesting trends and directions to be further explored and confirmed through subsequent research efforts.

B. ASSESSMENT OF PILOT SITE OPERATIONS

The data presented in this section was derived from three separate sources incorporated into the overall evaluation effort:

1. Monthly Management Report Forms, completed by each site throughout the pilot test. These forms requested information about each sites's activiteis relating the Practices File as well as problems experienced with any of these activites. In addition, information on personnel hours and costs associated with File activities was provided (see Item 1 in Appendix D: Evaluation Forms).

2. Pilot Test Site Case Studies, completed by managers of six of the pilot sites during the final month of the pilot test (see Case Study Protocol, Appendix E). Of particular significance to the evaluation was the information presented in the case studies on the issues of benefits, problems and constraints related to Practices File use at the various sites (see Section 2.7.3 for a synopsis of the case studies). This data collection effort was supported solely by BRS, Inc., and was included because BRS felt it added substantially to an understanding of pilot site operations and site perceptions of the potential of the File.

3. Final Assessment Interviews with key personnel from each site at the close of the pilot test. These telephone interviews, conducted by the Project Evaluator, focused on assesments of individual File features, as well as the File's overall utitlity and feasibility in terms of site operations (see Item 2 in Appendix D).

The data resulting from each of these sources are summarized below under 5 separate headings, as follows:

- Practices File usage
- Perceived benefits of File
- Assessment of File features
- Problems and constraints experienced
- Suggestions for future use of File

Practices File Usage

As indicated in earlier discussions of the pilot network, the sites chosen for participation were quite varied in terms of structure, personnel, data base search capability, clientele, and specific ways in which the Practices File was incorporated into ongoing site operations. These variations are clearly reflected in the patterns of File usage during the six-month pilot test. As shown in Table 1, use of the Practices File varied across sites from a low of 1 search to a high of 137 separate searches. These variations were found within as well as between particular categories of sites.

Table 2 displays the same distribution range with respect to the total number of hours used by site and by category. Hourly usage of the Practices File varied from .51 hours to 35.33 hours, with total usage of the Practices File, ERIC and other available data bases ranging from .51 hours to 79.16 hours.

Figure 6 shows the usage figures for the pilot site network across the six-month test period. The graph illustrates the low usage of the File during the Summer months and the significant increase experienced during October and November. It is interesting to note that the percentage of Practices File usage as compared to total usage was increasing as the test period closed. Also note, worthy is the fact that usage by the pilot sites of the Practices File far out distanced the total usage for NIMIS by all BRS customers. Since NIMIS, is a larger data base and available to a far greater number of users, this comparison is quite favorable.

A number of specific problems occurring at some of the sites prevented extensive use of the File; thus, one should be careful about interpreting these figures as indicative of potential file utility to a particular type of information center. The Alaska Department of Education, for example experienced a significant disruption when the person initially assigned and trained to manage the Practices File operation at that site left during the early weeks of the pilot test. Several weeks of searching were lost while a replacement was hired, trained and prepared to search the File. The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) in Texas experienced another type of disruption when a regional resource file, planned to coincide with the Practices File, failed to materialize as a result of internal problems. Lacking this mechanism to attract clients to the search services offered by SEDL, demand for searches of the Practices File was virtually nonexistent. Still other sites, including the Educational Research Library at NIE,

Table 1: Distribution of Practices File Usage (number of searches), Site, Category and Interview Pilot Test Sites

Site Category	Pilot Test Site	Total Number of Searches Conducted by Site	Total Number of Searches Conducted by Category
State Education Agencies	Alaska Illinois Texas	8 62 28	98
Teacher Centers	Maine Minnesota	92 51	143
Regional Exchange Labs	Oregon Texas	137 1	138
Intermediate Agencies	California Michigan	30 37	67
ERIC Clearinghouse	Ohio	17	17
Information Broker	NIE/ERL	13	13
Library Network	Missouri	97	97
Urban Public Schools	Atlanta Washington, D.C.	45 54	99
Total Number of Searches Conducted			672

Table 2: Distribution of Practices File Usage (Number of Hours), by Site, Category and Interview Pilot Test Sites*

Site Category	Pilot Test Site	Total Number of Hours Used by Site**	Total Number of Hours Used by Category
State Education Agencies	Alaska Illinois Texas	7.91 (13.38) 12.22 (52.37) 2.24 (24.78)	22.37 (90.53)
Teacher Centers	Maine Minnesota	9.12 (79.16) 16.89 (28.61)	26.01 (107.77)
Regional Exchange Labs	Oregon Texas	12.03 (24.49) .51 (.51)	12.54 (25.00)
Intermediate Agencies	California Michigan	6.66 (12.70) 4.75 (5.23)	11.41 (17.93)
ERIC Clearinghouse	Ohio	2.02 (8.35)	2.02 (8.35)
Information Broker	NIE/ERL	11.22 (24.68)	11.22 (24.68)
Library Network	Missouri	35.33 (44.46)	35.33 (44.46)
Urban Public Schools	Atlanta Washington, D.C.	5.67 (15.14) 7.11 (20.50)	12.78 (35.64)
Total Number of Hours Used			133.68 (354.36)

* The relatively large number of hours as compared to the number of searches (Table 1) is accounted for by the time spent in training practice and demonstrations.

** Number of Practices File hours is the first figure, number of total hours searching Practices File, ERIC and other available data bases is shown in parenthesis.

experienced a variety of internal reorganizations and cutbacks which prevented them from actively reaching out to attract new clientele groups for whom the Practices File would be more applicable than for their current research-oriented clients. These and other related difficulties are more extensively discussed later in this section of the report, under the heading of Problems and Constraints.

Perceived Benefits

Although File usage varied considerably across pilot sites, site personnel were highly consistent in their perception of benefits accruing from use of the Practices File. Four key benefits to the sites were repeatedly mentioned in the monthly reports, case studies and final interviews:

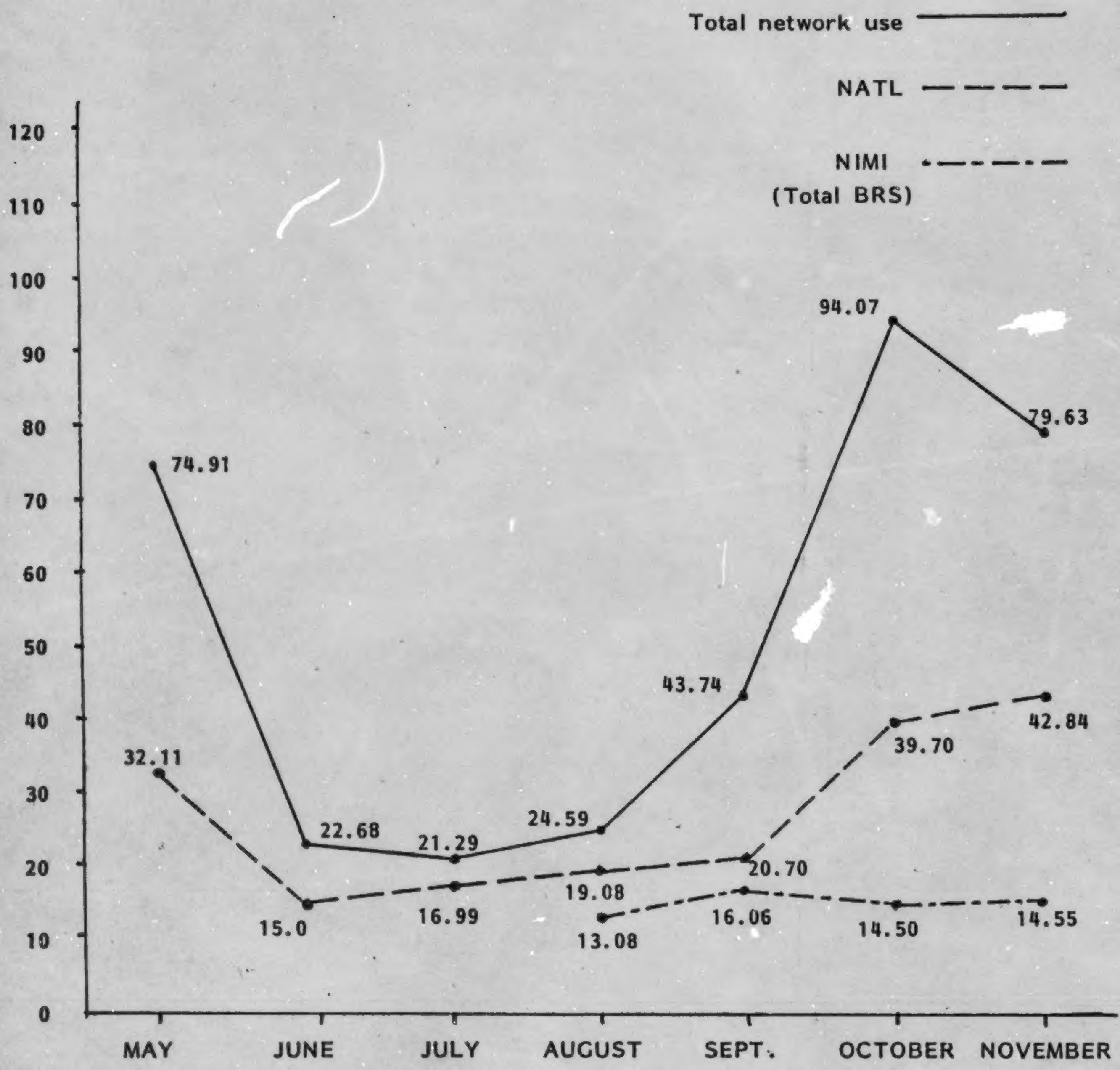
- Increased site capacity for identifying and meeting clients' information needs more extensively, more easily and more quickly;
- Increased linkages to educational practitioners, who in many cases are perceived as a new clientele group;
- Increased site visibility within service area and expanded use of other services offered;
- Increased site capacity to do computer searching, including in some cases, learning a new search system.

In addition, site personnel were virtually unanimous in their perception of benefits of the Practices File for their clients, viewing the File as containing highly significant information for practitioners, which is not generally available elsewhere. Almost all site personnel stressed the importance for clients to have access to direct contact information on programs and practices which have been tried before. As a searcher in one of the urban sites noted, "Teachers are always wanting to know what they can do to improve classroom practice. The Practices File makes it possible for them to act on this, not just wonder about it." Several site personnel also mentioned as an important benefit to clients the

Figure 6

PILOT SITE NETWORK ACTIVITY

(Hours Per Month)



opportunities provided through the File to learn about people who are working in areas of mutual interest.

Assessment of File Features

Particularly through the final interviews, site personnel were asked to assess certain features of the Practices File which had been incorporated into the pilot test, beginning with the type of content included in the File. Site personnel were unanimous in their desire to have all validated programs or projects included in the File, regardless of the source of validation or the specific criteria employed. Twelve of the fourteen sites also felt the inclusion of locally developed, non-validated programs was of significant benefit to their clients, particularly as a means of alerting practitioners to developments occurring within their particular locales, or for use in the process of broad curriculum development.

In response to a specific question on whether the Practices File should exercise some measure of "quality control" over the entries included, a large majority of sites (10 out of 14) felt this was not a desirable option. Many noted that the assessment of "quality" is a very subjective issue, and that what may be especially valuable to one practitioner as an idea or reference may be regarded by another as quite insignificant. The thrust of this opinion, however, was strongly in the direction of partitioning the File so that validated programs could be searched separately (a presently available capability) in cases where the assessments of program quality by an external review panel were of particular importance or interest.

A small number of sites (one information broker and one SEA) indicated that their clients are generally skeptical about programs which have not been validated and thus recommended against including non-validated practices in the File. Persons interviewed at both those sites cited existing problems with the quality of entries in ERIC in support of their feeling that the File should not be a "depository" for all educational practices, but rather a listing of current "best practices" across a variety of content areas. However, the fact that other sites serving the same general type of clientele expressed sharply different opinions on this issue, should caution against any firm conclusions being drawn at this point.

Differences of opinion were found as well on the issue of exactly what is felt to be suitable for inclusion in a practices file. For sites, again of differeing types, indicated a dissatisfaction with the inclusion of materials such as curricular guides in the Practices File since this was felt to duplicate listings already available in ERIC. These respondents recommended File entries be restricted to actual programs or projects. The majority of sites, however, did not perceive such potential duplication as a problem, often noting the difficulties involved in delineating "practices" from "materials." Several site personnel expressed the feeling that practitioners who would be drawn to the Practices File may not be regular users of ERIC, thus the File should contain listings of materials of relevance to actual classroom practice. One middle-of-the-road position expressed was a recommendation that the File contain cross references to related ERIC documents.

Following up on the discussion of the File content, site personnel were asked about the possible value of including commercial programs or materials in the Practices File. Opinions on this issue were almost evenly divided among the fourteen pilot sites. About half of the sites indicated that they felt such products would be quite helpful to clients and that they would provide a good accompaniment to noncommercial programs and materials. One such site, an SEA, noted that since the nature of a Practices File implies "practical resources" to practitioners, it is essential to include the vast practical resources of large corporations and the publishing world. Several sites mentioned the particular value for commercially published assessment instruments to be included in the file.

The other half of the sites were equally strong in their opinion that commercial products ought not be included. Most frequently cited as reasons for this opinion were fears that this would turn the Practices File into a "propaganda media" for commercial interests, difficulties involved in making. some assessment of the merit of these products, reluctance of clients to pay significant amounts in order to inspect the products for possible adoption, and the fact that other sources already exist for the dissemination of some commercially developed products.

A second broad issue discussed regarding specific File features was the format of the present File entries. Virtually all site personnel interviewed reported a satisfaction with the comprehensiveness of information included in the abstract. Several indicated that, in many cases, the information provided to clients was complex enough to require some "translation" by site personnel. Almost half of the sites (6 out of 14) indicated that they found some entries quite redundant, particularly National Diffusion Network programs, and suggested some streamlining of these. However, almost all felt that, as a rule, more information is preferable to less.

Some specific concerns were expressed regarding the unevenness of evaluation information provided in the abstracts, and several sites recommended that a statement by consistently included in cases where no evaluation information is available on the effectiveness of a given practice or program. In a final question regarding information provided in the abstract, site personnel were asked whether they fled adequate source documentation was being provided. Very few sites had yet received any feedback from clients regarding whether or not they had been able to follow up on the practices identified through their

File searches. One site; a teacher center which routinely provieds a follow-up services to clients, reported, however, that their follow-up of sources identified through about 90 File searches conducted had yielded a 70% rate of response. In almost all these cases, the response was described by site personnel as adequately meeting the client's needs. It is certainly too early to tell whether similar results will be forthcoming from other follow-up efforts, and until this is known caution should be taken in interpreting the experiences of this one site.

Potentially significant problems which were identified in the area of follow-up activities focused on the fact that some programs, including state-validated Title IV-C Demonstration Projects, are unable to disseminate outside their particular states according to the terms of their dissemination grants (this is indicated on all IV-C File entries); and that in other cases, projects simply do not have available resources to respond to widely dispersed queries. Several site personnel recommended that these issues be directly addressed in the abstract on such programs, so that clients are made aware of possible problems with obraining further information or direct contact assistance.

Problems and Constraints

Throughout the evaluation of the pilot test, special attention was given to identifying the specific problems which information sites encountered in attempting to incorporate the Practices File into their ongoing operations. The problems which were indentified through the monthly reporting system, the case studies and the final interviews were found to be of three different types:

- Those dealing with aspects of the Practices File itself, including technical issues of searching;
- Those involving site operations; and
- Those related to the pilot test procudures.

The key difficulties of each type are summarized below:

File problems: To one extent or another, every site reported encountering difficulties with the limited scope and content of the pilot test File. The fact that quite often this resulted in very few "hits" on a particular search was felt by site personnel to account for most of the negative reactions to the File expressed by clients. Beyond this, however, most problems of this sort centered on the technical issues involved in actually searching the File. The majority of the pilot sites had not previously used the BRS system of conducting data base searches, and almost half of the sites, at the time of the pilot test, were using another system in addition to BRS for searches of data bases other than the Practices File. Quite consistently, those sites which were new to computerized searching reported a variety of technical difficulties during the early months of the pilot test. However, with experience these sites gained considerable proficiency in searching and, at the conclusion of the pilot test, consistently reported feeling quite comfortable with the procedures of translating clients' needs into successful search strategies. Each of these sites described the technical assistance provided by BRS as highly adequate in meeting the difficulties they had initially experienced.

The six sites which had had considerable experience with other search systems were, on the other hand, quite explicit in expressing their continuing difficulties with the BRS system. In most cases, these problems stemmed from searchers' confusion with the use of two different systems and the inherent difficulties in making the necessary adjustments when searching the Practices File. The following complaints were typical of those received from site personnel in this category:

- Language and programming is confusing.
- System gives inadequate commands and messages.

- Procedures are cumbersome and too time consuming.
- Turn-around time on output is too long.
- Recollection of search logic is extremely difficult since a separate search strategy sheet is not provided.

The fact that these issues were almost never riased by site personnel who are regular BRS users or who had learned the BRS system as their initial experience with computerized searching, suggests that they result primarily from the difficulties associated with change, rather than to intrinsic problems with the Practices File or its accompanying BRS-developed software. At the same time, the consistency with which they are identified by regular users of other search systems also suggests some areas in which programmatic and software changes may be quite advisable (although some of these problems could be resolved through more training and experience). It is quite important to note, however, that perceived search system difficulties of the sort described here are quite distinct from criticisms of the Practices File itself, and could be quite readily solved either through adjustments in BRS search procedures or more extensive in-service training in these procedures.

Site operations problems: As briefly mentioned in the discussion of File usage, several sites experienced difficulties which, while not a result of the Practices File, significantly affected its utilization. While such occurrences as personnel changes, reorganizations and cutbacks will always affect the delivery of any information services, information obtained from some pilot sites suggest that site operating procedures, in particular regarding client contact, may have significant effects on use of the Practices File. The two key problems of this sort which were mentioned fall at opposite ends of the continuum of sites' direct contact and involvement with clients. At one extreme are sites which serve a geographically dispersed clientele which have little or no direct personal contact in processing information searches. Personnel at one such site, a large intermediate service agency, mentioned difficulties with translating clients' general requests into well-focused searches of the Practices File

On the other extreme, several sites, including teachers centers, described themselves as "one-stop information centers", which not only process information requests and conduct searches, but which provide follow-up documents and materials to clients as well. In the case of Practices File searches, this operating procedure has sometimes felt to be burdensome to site personnel, since, unlike ERIC documents, follow-up materials on individual programs and practices are not presently available from a centralized source. Once agian, since the entire area of follow-up remains largely unkown at this time, it is not possible to speculate as to the ultimate effects of such procedures. However, it may be worthwhile at this point merely to note that some alterations in client-site contacts and expectations may be required.

One additional problem involving site operations which was quite frequently mentioned was the fact that, because of limitations of staff time or other resources, adequate awareness activities vis-a-vis the Practice File were unable to be undertaken. Almost every site expressed the opinion that "hands-on", face-to-face demonstration of the file clients is the most effective way of creating file awareness. However, in several cases this was felt to be more a time-consuming activity than what the site could undertake. Some sites also maintained that they were reluctant to invest heavily in awareness activities due to the short term of the pilot test and the limited scope and content of the File itself.

Pilot test problems: Two quite frequently reported difficulties in this area concerned the timing of the pilot test, and the various data collection procedures required of pilot test participants. Regarding the first, almost all sites indicated that their demand for searches of any sort is significantly down during the summer months. During the early Fall, many sites further described their clients as too consumed in beginning-of-year problems to focus on such future-oriented issues as new programs or curriculum developments. Almost all sites reported heaviest demand for Practices File usage in the closing weeks of the pilot test (see Figure 6) when clients were apparently beginning to plan for changes to be made in the coming academic year. This, coupled with the feeling that most of the initial searching difficulties had been worked through by this time, led to a quite widely-felt frustration at the close of the pilot test in mid-November. Several site personnel expressed the view that had the test been run from October to March, a quite different pattern of File usage volume would have emerged.

The second most frequently reported problem with the pilot test involved the required data collection procedures which were considered by many sites to be quite burdensome. Of particular concern here was the requirement to collect and record on-line information about File users prior to executing the search request (User Profile Information List, Item 3 in Appendix D). While recognizing the value of this information for the pilot test evaluation, almost all sites felt this was a cumbersome and time-consuming procedure which, in some cases, affected their motivation to use the Practices File (at the Louisville training session, site representatives indicated a preference for on-line data reporting rather than completing forms). In addition, most sites indicated having significant difficulties with getting clients to complete and return the search appraisal forms accompanying the results of each File search. This latter problem is more extensively discussed in the following section dealing with evaluations.

One additional problem related to the pilot test, mentioned by the two urban sites, was that because of the lateness of their inclusion in the test, they missed the pre-pilot training session. While on-site training was provided to both sites, these personnel expressed the feeling that they would have benefited from the group sessions. A related problem also mentioned by both urban sites was the difficulty encountered in producing and distributing adequate awareness materials in time to generate a sizable clientele for the Practices File. Again, this was attributed to their late start as pilot test participants.

In spite of the variety of problems encountered, virtually every site concluded that the benefits resulting from availability of the Practices File, particularly the potential benefits to clients, the pilot sites expressed an extremely enthusiastic affirmation of the File, describing it as "a very exciting idea with excellent potential". Other typical comments received noted that "interest among our clients is extremely high", "the benefits are without question", and that "participation in the pilot test was overall a tremendous experience". Every site strongly endorsed future development and expansion of the Practices File.

Suggestions for Future Use

Throughout the pilot test, a wide variety of suggestions for changes in Practices File procedures were elicited from site personnel. In most cases, these were made in conjunction with reporting a specific problem encountered, and some of these recommendations for change have already been mentioned in the preceding discussions of pilot site data. The following list of suggestions, falling into four broad categories, summarizes the key suggestions for future File development and use made by site personnel:

File Content

- Expand content to all subject areas and levels, including higher education and adult education
- Include both validated and locally developed, non-validated programs
- Clarify File content (i.e., practices vs. materials)
- Include commercial products*
- Omit commercial products*

Abstract Format

- Streamline abstracts to eliminate redundancies (especially NDN)
- Label intended use for practices more clearly
- Specify applicability levels of programs more clearly
- Involve program developers in writing their own abstracts to enhance specificity
- Include statement on absence of evaluation information where appropriate
- Include statement on limitations regarding dissemination capability where appropriate

Technical Procedures

- Provide more extensive in-service training in search procedures to site personnel
- Simplify Technical Manual for use by inexperienced searchers
- Simplify and add flexibility to software (search system)
- Develop more comprehensive Thesaurus

* pilot sites equally divided on this suggestion

- Improve messages to be more helpful when mistakes are made (search system)
- Provide summary of search strategy on separate sheet (search system)
- Improve search-save procedure to allow more extensive savings of searches (search system)

User Products/Services

- Develop centralized awareness materials to supplement site activities
- Printout letter with search results explaining to clients the nature of Practices File and how material is to be used
- Printout clearer explanations of abbreviations used in abstract
- Develop in-service training materials to assist practitioners in adapting File information for classroom use
- Microfilm print materials and deposit them in centralized locations to facilitate user follow-up

C. USER EVALUATION

This section of the report summarizes the findings of an analysis of user data, obtained throughout the six-month pilot test of the Practices File. These data were of two types: User Profile Information which was obtained from all users of the Practices File at the time of the initial search request (Item 3 in Appendix D); and evaluative information concerning the specific file search, gathered by means of a Search Appraisal Form sent along with the search results (Item 4 in Appendix D).

As indicated earlier in this report, the volume of search activity varied quite significantly across the pilot sites. This fact, coupled with the difficulty some sites had in retrieving completed Search Appraisal Forms from clients, resulted in a rather uneven representation of pilot sites in the user data analysis (see Table 3). It should be noted, however, that, while the users providing complete data for this analysis are not a representative sample by site, they received Practices File search services

Table 3: Distribution of File Usage and User Follow-up, by Pilot Test Site

Site	Total Number of Searches Conducted	Number of SAFs Sent Out	Number of SAFs Returned*	Percentage of Total Response
State Education Agencies				
Alaska	8	2	0	
Illinois	62	36	8	
Texas (SEA)	28	16	0	3.5
Teacher Centers				
Maine	92	92	40	17.3
Minnesota	51	51	35	15.2
Regional Exchange Labs				
Oregon	137	120	84	36.4
Texas	1	0	0	
Intermediate Agencies				
California	30	25	0	
Michigan	37	31	12	5.2
ERIC Clearinghouse				
Ohio	17	250**	0	
Information Broker				
NIE/ERL	13	0	0	
Library Network				
Missouri	97	68	21	9.1
Urban Public Schools				
Atlanta	45	12	10	4.3
Washington, D.C.	54	31	21	9.1
TOTAL:	672	734	231	100.0%

*These figures reflect the number of completed forms returned to the Project Evaluator by December 22, 1979.

**Although approximately 17 separate searches of the File were conducted by this site, materials from these searches were sent out to approximately 250 different clients, and in each case a Search Appraisal Form was attached.

from all major categories of sites participating in the pilot test. Further, they very closely approximate the total population of File users in terms of the all salient characteristics. Specific data on these characteristics are presented below under the heading of Respondent Profile.

Respondent Profile

User Profile Information, obtained for all users of the Practices File(N=672), focused on six key issues. primary position, previous use of site services, awareness of Practices File prior to search, purposes for which search was conducted, immediate user group to which results of search will be applied, and intended scope of application of search results. The first columns of Table 1 shows the percentage distribution of File users by each of these characteristics.

Five weeks following the close of the pilot test, a total of 231 Search Appraisal Forms (SAF) were received from users of the Practices File. This number of respondents represents more than one-third (34.3%) of the total 672 File searches conducted during the pilot test, a return rate which compares very favorably with those obtained for similar follow-up by information centers.

As presented in the second column of Table 4, the percentage distribution of Search Appraisal Form respondents is very similar to that of all File users, for each of the six key profile characteristics. Thus, it clearly appears that responses for this group of users can validly be used as a basis for drawing conclusions about user reactions to the Practices File. Taking a look at these specific characteristics, it can be seen that the major categories of all File users, as well as those returning the SAF, are elementary or secondary teachers, elementary and secondary school administrators and other school personnel. Test-site staff also made up a sizeable proportion of users.

When this distribution is examined according to site, however, it becomes clear that the various types of File users are not at all evenly spread across

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of All File Users and Search Appraisal Form Respondents, by User Profile Characteristics

	Percentages of SAF Respondents (N=231)	Percentages of All File Users (N=672)
PRIMARY POSITION:		
Elem./Sec. School Teacher	28.2	33.3
Elem./Sec. School Administrator	19.5	14.3
Other Elem./Sec. School Personnel	14.1	13.0
Post-Secondary Education Personnel	3.9	4.8
Intermediate Service Agency Personnel	5.3	3.0
State Education Agency Personnel	7.3	8.2
Federal & Other Agency Personnel	3.0	0.0
Graduate Student	5.0	3.5
Test Site Staff	8.5	10.8
Other	5.2	5.2
USED SITE SERVICES BEFORE:		
Yes	59.2	56.3
No	40.8	43.7
AWARE OF FILE PRIOR TO SEARCH:		
Yes	51.3	53.2
No	48.7	46.8
USER PURPOSE:		
Administrative Planning	12.9	12.0
College Course Work	7.5	4.9
Program Development	21.9	23.1
Curriculum Development	19.7	17.4
Classroom Instruction	13.6	13.1
Personal/Professional Development	6.8	8.3
Proposal Development	5.1	8.0
Research/Evaluation	9.4	10.9
Dissemination of NDN Programs	1.7	1.1
Other	1.4	1.1
IMMEDIATE USER GROUP:		
Elem./Sec. Students	34.7	31.7
Teachers	28.5	26.5
Administrative Personnel	22.9	23.5
Parents	2.3	1.3
Community Groups	2.0	1.3
School Board/Advisory Group	2.2	.9
Paraprofessionals	.2	8.7
Other	7.2	6.1
INTENDED SCOPE OF APPLICATION:		
One of several classrooms	26.7	19.9
A single school	18.8	22.1
A district or school system	32.6	31.6
Districts throughout a state	10.5	11.7
Personal Use	5.5	4.8
Other	6.1	5.2

the pilot test sites, a possible indication of the audiences which the different sites reached most effectively. Table 5 shows the distribution of users retruning the Search Appraisal Form by Primary position and pilot site.

Table 5: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Primary Position and Pilot Site

Pilot Sites

Position	State Education Agencies	Teacher Centers		Regional Exchange Labs	Intermediate Agencies	Library Network	Urban Public Schools	
	Illinois (N=8)	Maine (N=38)	Minnesota (N=32)	Oregon (N=83)	Michigan (N=12)	Missouri (N=20)	D.C. (N=21)	Atlanta (N=8)
Elem./Sec. School Teacher		68.4	21.9	24.1	33.3	50.0	47.6	
Elem./Sec.School Administrator	25.0	2.6	18.8	19.3	25.0		9.5	37.5
Other Elem./Sec. School Personnel	37.5	13.2	18.8	9.6	16.7	15.0	14.3	
Post-Sec. Educational Personnel		2.6	6.3	4.8		10.0	9.5	
Intermediate Service Agency Personnel		2.6		3.6	25.0			
State Education Agency Personnel	37.5	2.6	3.1	14.5			9.5	
Graduate Student			6.3	1.2		20.0	4.8	
Test-Site Staff		7.9	9.4	18.1				50.0
Other			15.6	4.8		5.0	4.8	12.5
TOTALS	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Regarding the second and third user profile characteristics, Table 4 shows that more than half of all File users, and those completing the SAF, were previous users of the pilot test-site services, and a slightly smaller percentage were specifically aware of the Practices File prior to making their information search request. More specific inquiry on the Search Appraisal Form revealed that respondents were about equally divided in identifying three sources of their awareness:

1. a brochure, newsletter, or other written awareness material sent out from information sit and/or central clearinghouse (37.0%)
2. an awareness presentation (formal or informal) by information site or clearinghouse personnel (27.8%)
3. other sources, in particular a colleague or professional acquaintance (34.5%).

Also, in a related question asked on the Search Appraisal Form, almost three-quarters of the respondents (74.9%) indicated that they had previously searched other information sources. Thus, it appears that these users of the Practices File, for the most part, are fairly knowledgeable about computer searching of data bases, and most have prior experiences on the basis of which to formulate their judgments about this File.

Regarding users' purposes for seeking the information leading to the search of the Practice File, the data show that the three most often recorded purposes were program development, curriculum development, and classroom instruction, followed by administrative planning and research/evaluation. These priorities are shown both for all File users as well as for those completing the Search Appraisal Form. It can be seen that respondents to the Search Appraisal Form are highly representative of the total population in terms of the purposes motivating use of the Practices File. Again, however, a more detailed look at the latter group shows that these purposes are not evenly distributed by pilot test sites, reflecting the audiences reached by different sites (see Table 6).

Responses provided by File users on the SAF provide somewhat more specific insight into their plans for using the information resulting from the File search. Again, the most commmonly mentioned general usages were curriculum development and program development. A fairly large number of users (approximately 20%), specifically mentioned in this regard curriculum or programs for gifted students. Other curricular areas which information was sought included nursing, career awareness, high-school-level reading and K-12 science. Specific program interests also focused on minimum competency, delinquency prevention, early childhood education and parental involvement.

Finally, the data show that the three most commonly identified user groups for File search results were elementary or secondary school students, teachers, and administrative personnel; while the most typical scope of application was found to be the district or school system, followed by either a single school or one or several classrooms in a school. These data again found to be very similar both all File users and Search Appraisal Form respondents, support the notion that the Practices File may emerge as a significant knowledge base to support school and classroom improvement efforts.

Practices File Search Evaluations

On the Search Appraisal Form respondents were asked to rate the information provided throught the search of the Practices File according to six specific aspects: how well it met the information request, whether it was new to the user, if adequate information was provided for user to follow-up on the practice, if material provided adequate evaluative details to be of value to the user, clarity in terms of sharing with a colleague, and adaptability

Table 6: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Primary Purpose Motivating Search and by Pilot Site

Primary Purpose Motivating Search	Pilot Sites State Education Agencies	Teacher Centers		Regional Exchange Labs	Intermediate Agencies	Library Network	Urban Public Schools	
	Illinois (N=8)	Maine (N=39)	Minnesota (N=34)	Oregon (N=79)	Michigan (N=12)	Missouri (N=20)	D.C. (N=18)	Atlanta (N=8)
Administrative Planning	37.5		14.7	19.0	8.3		9.5	
College Course Work			5.9	1.3		25.0	9.5	
Program Development	12.5	15,4	14,7	40.5	50.0	10.0	23.8	12.5
Curriculum Development	25.0	17.9	17.6	11.4	16.7	20.0	4.8	
Classroom Instruction		53.8	2.9	3.8	16.7	25.0		
Personal/ Professional Development			8.8	1.3		5.0	23.8	12.5
Proposal Development			23.5	6.3	8.3	5.0	23.8	37.5
Research/ Evaluation	25.0	12.8		12.7		10.1	4.8	37.5
Dissemination of NDN Programs			8.8					
Other			2.9	3.8				
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 7: Respondents Evaluation of Specific Aspects of the Practices File

Ratings		a. Met Request	b. Newness	c. Adequacy for Follow-up	d. Adequacy of Evaluation	e. Clarity	f. Adaptability
Positive	1	65 (28.6%)	100 (44.6%)	80 (37.6%)	41 (19.6%)	87 (39.0%)	61 (27.5%)
	2	72 (31.7%)	78 (34.8%)	80 (37.6%)	82 (39.2%)	89 (39.9%)	73 (32.9%)
	3	38 (16.7%)	33 (14.7%)	37 (17.4%)	54 (25.8%)	36 (16.1%)	39 (17.6%)
	4	26 (11.5%)	9 (4.0%)	8 (3.8%)	20 (9.6%)	4 (1.8%)	25 (11.3%)
Negative	5	26 (11.5%)	4 (1.8%)	8 (3.8%)	12 (5.7%)	7 (3.1%)	24 (10.8%)
TOTAL		227 (100.0%)	224 (100.0%)	213 (100.0%)	209 (10010%)	223 (100.0%)	222 (100.0%)
Median Response		2.20	1.65	1.82	2.30	1.80	2.23

to the individual's use. Each aspect was rated on a scale of 1-5, with 1 indicating the most positive evaluation and 5 indicating the least positive. As summarized in Table 7, overall responsed from the users who completed the SAF were highly favorable.

Among all six aspects of the File which were rated, none received a median rating in excess of 2.3, indicating an overall clearly positive reaction. Search results were rated especially favorably in terms of their "newness" to the user (Mdn=1.65); their clarity for sharing with others (Mdn=1.80), and their provision of adequate information for follow-up (Mdn=1.82). Two of the less positively rated aspects--extent to which results met the user's information request, and their adaptability for the individual's specific use--appear to be vary closely related to the limited scope and size of the test File. Given the limitations of the pilot test File, the median ratings obtained can be interpreted as quite favorable and certainly very promising. Consistent with remarkes made by pilot site personnel, users responses to this particular aspect suggest that some additional evaluation information may be worth including in File abstracts.

Respondents' evaluations of these specific aspects of the Practices File were explored in more detail by looking at these judgments according to pilot test site, position of respondents, and primary purpose motivating the search. Tables 8, 9, and 10 show the percentage of respondents giving positive responses (i.e., ratings of 1-2) to each aspect of the Practices File, by the three variables of site, position and purpose of search.

Table 8 : Percentage of Respondents Giving Positive Responses to Selected Aspects of the Practices File, by Site

	Aspects of File					
Site	Met Request	Material New	Adequacy of Follow-up	Adequacy of Evaluation Details	Clarity	Adaptability
State Education Agencies						
Illinois (N=8)	62.5	62.5	50.0	62.5	62.5	62.5
Teacher Centers						
Maine (N=40)	60.0	86.8	85.7	62.9	84.6	66.7
Minnesota (N=35)	82.8	80.0	82.3	70.5	91.5	82.8
Regional Exchange Labs						
Oregon (N=80)	57.6	78.8	76.3	54.2	78.2	48.7
Intermediate Agencies						
Michigan (N=12)	58.4	75.0	75.0	63.7	66.7	66.6
Library Network						
Missouri (N=21)	33.3	90.0	84.2	55.0	80.0	47.4
Urban Public Schools						
D.C. (N=21)	57.1	81.0	45.0	57.9	61.9	52.4
Atlanta (N=10)	70.0	50.0	66.6	40.0	80.0	80.0

Table 9 : Percentage of Respondents Giving Positive Responses to Selected Aspects of the Practices File, by Primary Position

	Aspects of File					
Primary Position	Met Request	Material New	Adequacy of Follow-up	Adequacy of Evaluation Details	Clarity	Adapt-ability
Elementary/Secondary School Teacher (N=76)	55.9	82.9	70.7	47.9	76.3	55.3
Elementary/Secondary School Administrator (N=33)	62.5	84.4	74.2	59.4	81.3	68.8
Other Elementary/Secondary School Personnel (N=30)	60.0	75.0	80.8	67.9	82.1	67.9
Post/Secondary Educational Personnel (N=11)	54.6	80.0	100.0	55.6	90.0	60.0
Intermediate Service Agency Personnel (N=7)	71.5	71.4	83.3	100.0	83.3	83.3
State Education Agency Personnel (N=19)	50.0	73.7	57.9	70.6	78.9	44.7
Graduate Student (N=8)	62.5	87.5	75.0	100.0	87.5	50.0
Test-Site Staff (N=25)	58.3	62.5	71.4	45.0	81.8	54.2

Table 10 : Percentage of Respondents Giving Positive Responses to Selected Aspects of the Practices File, by Primary Purpose of Search

	Aspects of File					
Primary Purpose of Search	Met Request	Material New	Adequacy of Follow-up	Adequacy of Evaluation Details	Clarity	Adapt-ability
Administrative Planning (N=25)	58.3	72.0	70.8	57.1	71.2	54.2
College Courses (N=10)	30.0	88.9	55.6	62.5	77.8	37.5
Program Development (N=58)	58.6	79.3	76.4	64.2	78.9	56.1
Curriculum Development (N=31)	61.3	73.3	76.7	63.3	80.6	64.5
Classroom Instruction (N=32)	59.4	90.3	82.8	44.8	80.0	70.0
Personal/Professional Development (N=11)	72.7	72.7	72.7	63.6	81.8	63.6
Proposal Development (N=23)	82.6	82.6	73.9	72.7	82.6	78.3
Research Evaluation (N=21)	42.9	71.4	66.7	36.8	61.9	42.9
Dissemination of NDN Programs (N=3)	66.7	33.3	66.7	0	100.0	33.3

As seen from the figures in Table 8 , users at the two Teacher Centers (Maine and Minnesota) tended to be the most positive in their overall evaluations of the File, while those at the university-based library network (Missouri) were generally least enthusiastic about the utility of material received from File searches (45.5% of this latter group were using the File information for purposes other than direct instructional or program purposes, mainly for college course work; see Table 6). Similar differences were also found in the evaluations provided by users in different positions within the educational network, as shown in Table 9 . Intermediate agency personnel, and elementary/secondary school administrators have emerged as the most consistently positive user group. In terms of primary search purpose, the figures in Table 10 show that users evaluated as most positive those searches conducted for proposal development, curriculum development and classroom instruction. Dissemination of NDN programs and research/evaluation were found to be the purposes leading to the least positively evaluated searches, a finding which reflects the practitioner orientation of the Practices File development and test effort.

Additional evaluation of the Practices File was elicited through a question on the SAF which asked users to compare the File's quality with that of other information sources they have searched, such as ERIC or ECER. Among the almost three-quarters of all respondents who had had previous experience with other information sources, the comparative evaluations were extremely favorable to the Practices File. As shown in Table 11 , despite the File's limited scope and content, the overwhelming majority of respondents who had a basis for comparison (87.4%) rated the File's quality as equal or superior to most other sources; and more than one-third of all respondents (37.6%) rated the File as superior.

Table 11: Distribution of Respondents Having Previous Experience With Information Searches by Comparative Evaluation of the Practices File

Evaluation of Practices File	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
File's quality superior to most other sources	55	34.6
File's quality equal to most other sources	84	52.8
File's quality inferior to most other sources	20	12.6
Total Number of Respondents Having Previous Experience With Information Searches	159	100.0%

Table 12 : Percentage Distribution of Respondents Having Previous Experience With Information Sources, by Comparative Evaluation of the Practices File and Primary Position

	Elementary/Secondary School Teacher (N=43)	Elementary/Secondary School Administrator (N=25)	Other Elementary/Secondary School Personnel (N=21)	Post-Secondary Educational Personnel (N=10)	Intermediate Service Agency Personnel (N=7)	State Education Agency Personnel (N=16)	Graduate Student (N=4)	Test-Site Staff (N=20)
Superior	37.2	44.0	28.6	20.0	42.9	25.0	25.0	40.5
Equal	53.5	40.0	57.1	60.0	57.1	56.3	50.0	55.0
Inferior	9.3	16.0	14.3	20.0	0	18.8	25.0	5.0
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Among the relatively few respondents rating the Practices File's quality as inferior, most provided qualifying remarks such as the following, which stress the issue of limited content:

- "Not enough content--at least not on this subject"
- "ERIC has more but Practices File is more directly applicable to the need of educators"
- "It will be great when it develops more fully "

Consistent with previous findings, Table 12 shows that, among all categories of respondents, intermediate service agency personnel and elementary/secondary school administrators were found to be most likely to describe the Practices File as superior to other sources they have searched.

A space on the SAF asking for additional comments on File utility provided further insight into users' appraisals. Here again, the most frequently mentioned comment referred to the limited content of the File, with many users citing the need for a larger number of listings in specific topic areas. Additional suggestions for File improvement noted on the forms included the following:

- Include listings in all levels, secondary and adult education programs as well as the abundance of elementary programs
- Provide an explanation of the abbreviations on the left-hand column of the File abstracts
- Provide list of descriptors and key terms as well as clear search directions for users
- Improve format by putting each listing on a separate page
- Include more specifics on program activities and teaching strategies in the abstracts
- Compile all nationally validated programs together, rather than interspersed with other materials
- Provide more details on the effectiveness of programs cited

A large number of users provided general comments in this space as well, which were unanimously positive toward the File. Typical of these remarks are the following:

- "It's great. Right now, though, it's limited in field and documents represented. Once it's fully developed it could make a tremendous impact throughout K-university."
- "This is great information to have."
- "I'm impressed."
- "Excellent service--thank you."

Thus, overall it appears quite clear that users are overwhelmingly positive in their evaluation of the Practices File as an information source with very real potential for educational practitioners, and that the relatively small number of dissatisfactions which have been encountered relate primarily to limitations in present File content and size.

Future Use of the Practices File

A final topic explored through the SAF was users' feelings about their probable future use of the Practices File. Initial insight into this topic was obtained through responses to the question of whether users felt they could have obtained similar information through other sources, had the Practices File not been available. Fewer than one out of every three users (32.0%) felt they could have obtained similar information elsewhere, which suggests a very definite need on the part of the large majority for continued access to the File.

This was confirmed through responses to several direct questions regarding future use of the Practices File, assuming expansion to include practices and programs across all educational content areas. These data are summarized in Table 13. Regarding each of the three questions listed in this table, users were asked to rate their likelihood of use on a scale of 1-5, on which 1 represented the "most likely" and 5 the "least likely" response. While future use by self was generally rated as very likely, users were slightly less certain about File use by colleqgues, and considerably less certain if costs were involved. Even in this case, however, the median rating of 2.92 indicates that users would more likely than not continue to avail themselves of the Practices File. The data in Table 13 provides an indication of the ready user market and significatn user growth potential for the Practices File.

Table 13: Respondents' Likelihood of Future Use of Practices File

Ratings		Own Future Use	Colleagues' Future Use	Use with Cost
Very Likely	1	153 (68.6%)	80 (36.7%)	40 (18.3%)
	2	42 (18.8%)	60 (27.5%)	44 (20.1%)
	3	20 (9.0%)	56 (25.7%)	63 (28.8%)
	4	7 (3.1%)	18 (8.3%)	31 (14.2%)
Unlikely	5	1 (0.4%)	4 (1.8%)	41 (18.7%)
TOTAL		223 (100.0%)	218 (100.0%)	219 (100.0%)
Median Response		1.23	1.98	2.92

Table 14: Percentage of Respondents Giving Positive Responses Regarding Likelihood of Use, by Primary Position

Position	Own Future Use	Colleagues Future Use	Use With Costs
Elementary/Secondary School Teacher (N=70)	77.1	54.4	21.7
Elementary/Secondary School Administrator (N=33)	87.9	54.5	45.5
Other Elementary/Secondary School Personnel (N=30)	96.7	64.3	33.3
Post/Secondary Educational Personnel (N=10)	100.0	70.5	22.2
Intermediate Service Agency Personnel (N=7)	100.0	100.0	28.6
State Education Agency Personnel (N=19)	94.7	57.9	54.9
Graduate Student (N=8)	100.0	87.5	37.5
Test-Site Staff (N=25)	80.0	76.0	66.7

When these data are broken out by respondent's primary position as shown in Table 14, it appears clear that all categories of users regard themselves as extremely likely to use the Practices File in the future, with over three-quarters of each group providing responses of 1 or 2 to the question of own future use. These figures are particularly striking when compared to the findings of The Educational Information Market Study, undertaken in 1977 with funding from the National Institute of Education. Specifically, this earlier study found that, among all categories of educational information consumers, only social scientists and higher education faculty were regular users of bibliographic information sources. All other categories, including elementary/secondary school staff and administrators, district administrators, and educational agency personnel were much more likely to cite face-to-face contacts with individuals in their own organizations, telephone calls, educational newsletters, bulletins and other local media, as their primary information sources. The fact that a large proportion of users across all categories appear highly likely to use the Practices File in the future suggests the potential for a very definite shift in patterns of information use. It should be noted, however, that on the basis of these data, the issue of costs appears likely to be somewhat influential in reducing File usage, though less so for those groups for whom the File is targeted.

2.7.3 CASE STUDY DOCUMENTATION

A. PURPOSE OF CASE STUDIES

Originally proposed by BRS in the evaluation plan for Phase II, the development of case studies was eliminated by NIE because of budget limitations.

As the pilot test progressed, however, it became apparent that more site-centered documentation of pilot site experiences was critical to an understanding of how the File was used and how it might be improved. To address these needs, the project director and BRS management decided to commit a small amount of BRS resources to the development of case studies.

Project staff selected one site from each of the categories of user sites (with the exception of the Ohio State Clearinghouse and NIE) to prepare case studies. The following six sites were selected: Illinois-SEA, Mid-Coast Teachers' Center, NWREL-Regional Exchange, Wayne County Intermediate Service Agency, University of Missouri Library Network and Atlanta Public Schools-Urban District. Within each site a manager or other individual familiar with the operations of the File was contacted and asked to prepare the case study. Each person agreed (a small honorarium was provided by BRS to each case study writer).

A protocol for the case studies was prepared by BRS project staff (see Appendix E) and mailed to each writer with a letter detailing guidelines for the preparation of the report. During site visits by project staff, the protocol was divided into three sections and a suggestion was made concerning the percentage of the narrative to be given over to that section or topic. The first section focused on a brief sketch of the organization in which the information service was operating. Protocol questions dealt with origin, history, governance, major functions, staffing patterns, facilities and funding sources.

Approximately twenty percent of the case study was devoted to this section.

Section Two dealt with the pilot sites' operations, services and linkages, providing descriptions of site operations with particular emphasis on the linkages used and the services provided. About thirty percent of the narrative was given to a discussion of site operations. The last section was focused on Practices File operations and the relationship of the File to other major programs operated by the site or the organization. Special attention was given to problems and constraints, benefits and implications. Approximately fifty percent of the case study narrative was devoted to this section.

This section of the Pilot Site Operations and Evaluation Report presents an overview of the case studies prepared by pilot site personnel. Abstracts of each site are provided in Section 2.7.1. Appendix F contains copies of each of the six case studies prepared by site personnel. Primary attention in this section is given to the descriptions of the operations of the pilot sites and their experiences with the Practices File. The major purpose of this overview is to identify particular variables which impact on the development and operations of the Practices File.

B. ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

By placing the File within varied organizational contexts, BRS obtained a wide variety of clients and usages. Also, an extensive range of organizational variables could be examined as they impacted on the File. In general, the case studies and other observations made by BRS project staff substantiate the importance of organizational context to the use of information services, particularly of those resources contained in the Practices File. The following variables appear to be of primary significance.

Organizational mission. Each of the pilot sites operates within an organizational context which emphasizes the function of dissemination. In Illinois, this emphasis takes the form of a major SEA Division devoted to providing support services to local school districts, particularly principals and school administrators. In Maine, the Teachers' Center provides a wide range of professional development experiences for teachers in twelve communities served by the project. The Wayne County Intermediate School District serves the third largest county in the United States with administrative and direct student and teacher services. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's mission is to assist education, government, community agencies, business and labor in improving quality and equality in educational programs and processes. The Kansas City Metropolitan Information Network is a cooperative on-line searching group serving clients in a two-state metropolitan area. In Atlanta, a major mission of the school district is the development and implementation of an ongoing improvement process based on sophisticated assessment procedures applied at the classroom and building level.

In each case, the explicit or implicit mission of the organization was a key factor in the utilization of the File. In many cases, the organization's clients were viewed as those for whom the File was designed--practitioners in schools and those who serve them. Moreover, each agency had mechanisms in place which provided a market demand or motivation to seek out information resources, particularly those related to school and district improvement efforts.

Role of the pilot site within the organization. A related variable is the importance of the pilot site within the organizational structure. In each site, the unit involved in the pilot test was also viewed as a key component in the organization's mission. This centrality made it easy for the site to get support for its participation in the pilot test and to integrate Practices File information services into the overall service structure. For example, at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), the Library and Information Center had an organization-wide mission to provide information services to Lab staff and their clients. The Regional Exchange, operating within the Dissemination Program, was a major component of the Division of Educational Services.

Atlanta provides another illustration of the same variable. The Division of Research, Evaluation and Data Processing had a mandate to assist school staff in the analysis of information (statistical and programmatic) as a basis for planning improvements. This role was central to one of the district's goals, making it easy to place the File in a meaningful context where it would be used.

C. SITE OPERATIONS, SERVICES AND LINKAGES

Just as the organizational contexts varied, so did the operations, services and linkages used by each site. The case study protocol attempted to focus attention on these variations through questions about the clients, services, delivery mechanisms and operations of the sites. While the general client audience was school practitioners in nearly all cases, these clients most often were served indirectly by the sites and directly by intermediaries of one kind or another.

For example, In Atlanta and Wayne County, where practitioners were most directly served by the pilot test site, often the actual contact with the client was accomplished by some person not controlled directly by the pilot site staff. Thus, in Atlanta, Research Assistants and Research Associates interfaced the File with school staff. In Wayne County, various consultants worked between the site and the practitioner. In Illinois, Program Service team members acted as linkers. In such cases, the ultimate clients, school staff, were distinguished from immediate clients, the intermediaries. Since contact with an ultimate user of the information from the File often was accomplished through intermediaries, many of the sites have two client groups.

In providing dissemination services, most sites were focused on client systems engaged in teaching-learning and leadership-management areas. NWREL indicated an emphasis on "clients responsible for educational leadership, management and policymaking." Needs assessment strategies were employed to guide such services in all of the sites, although the formality and the sophistication varied considerably. In Illinois, NWREL, Atlanta and Wayne County, deliberate efforts were undertaken to collect and analyze data and other information to determine what dissemination services were needed by clients. Both the Mid-Coast Teachers' Center and the Library Network used clients' requests as a principal needs sensing device.

The range of dissemination services provided by the six pilot sites is extensive. With the exception of Atlanta, each of the sites had a formal dissemination program which had been established before the installation of the Practices File. In Wayne County, for example, the Professional Resource Center - Information Services Component provided a curriculum lab for developing media materials, a print materials production service, and training and technical assistance in locating and using information on programs, practices and new ideas. In Maine, the Teachers' Center provided the bulk of its dissemination services through workshops, seminars and curriculum development activities.

Service assessment activities undertaken by the sites vary considerably, ranging from minimal to comprehensive. While most sites employ some form of record-keeping on information services traffic and use some form of client feedback form, some engage in more extensive monitoring of clients' evaluations and other quality-control measures.

D. PRACTICES FILE OPERATIONS

The case studies document the relative ease with which the Practices File was integrated into the existing information services operations of the sites. Only in Atlanta, where no previous computer searching capability existed, was there a need to adjust roles and operations. In all cases, the Practices File became another resource which could be tapped for responding to information requests. The existing delivery mechanisms or linkages employed by the sites were used to convey information from the Practices File along with information from other sources. The decision to search the File usually was made by the searcher, depending on the nature and content of the request.

Depending on the normal operations of the site, marketing activities for the File ranged from little to extensive. This variation was a function of whether, what and how the site made clients aware of the specific resources and search systems being used. Because of the small size and scope of the File, some site managers were reluctant to conduct heavy front-end awareness activities. In some cases very little of this was done for other data bases, such as ERIC or NIMIS, on a regular basis as well. The rationale used in these cases was that the client need not know, particularly in early negotiations of a search request, what sources are or have been used to respond to his/her information need. In most cases, the only substantive needs addressed by front-end awareness of specific data bases are those related to "selling" a specific resource file. For this reason, most sites restricted their marketing of the File to small group presentations and demonstrations and to modest distributions of print materials. (No monies were provided to sites for marketing activities.)

NWREL is an exception to this generalization. In September, 1979, six thousand copies of a special brochure on the File were printed and distributed by the site to persons in the six-state region served by the Lab. Requestors of information services were encouraged to contact the searcher directly if they felt the Practices File could help them address their needs.

In all cases, sites alerted clients served to the materials obtained from the Practices File. In this way, awareness was conducted only in those cases where the nature of the clients' requests required a search of the File and where information was found. Usually, this awareness took the form of a special cover sheet placed before the Practices File abstracts. Where intermediaries were used, the explanation was also given in person.

In discussing problems and constraints associated with using the File, the case study writers' comments fall into three categories: (1) those directly attributable to the File; (2) those attributable to the pilot test of the File; and (3) those related to the BRS search system. Most of these comments are discussed in Section 2.7.2. It is significant that the problems identified in the first category are relatively few in number, although some are significant and will require further study. The major problems in this category are: (1) the need for more information about what's in the File and how to get more information; and (2) the format of File records.

Those problems attributable to the pilot test of the File include the brief test period, the small scope and size of the File, and insufficient orientation and training. Problems in category three centered on the search system and included: confusing language and programming, and cumbersome and time-consuming procedures. It is interesting to note that, in those sites where BRS was the only system used for searching (Atlanta, NWREL, Maine), no problems in the third category were identified.

The most often cited benefit to the sites resulting from the pilot test of the File was the use of a previously unavailable information content. Some sites specifically mentioned the National Diffusion Network and ESEA, Title IV-C programs as being especially valuable. Having the File available expanded the range of resources and made it easier to respond to practitioners' requests, which most often focused on the need for information about programs. As the site manager in Atlanta indicated:

> Our experience is that both ERIC and the Practices File are useful, but in different ways. The Practices File appears to be more directly applicable to the programmatic information needs emanating from the school improvement activities being undertaken by school staff. Thus, while ERIC can provide a large number of references which are related to nearly every topic, there are times when the Practices File has little or no information. The difference is that, when the Practices File does yield references addressed to the area of concern, those references are more directly applicable to the information need.

Benefits to clients were much harder to specify for most of the case study writers. At the time when the case reports were being prepared, most sites had received very few search appraisal forms from their clients. In those cases where forms were returned in sufficient quantities, managers noted the very positive comments from clients. Thus, for example, the Maine site manager noted that, in terms of forms she had received at that point, ninety percent of the clients felt the Practices File was equal or superior to other available information resources. Fifty percent indicated that they knew of no other source of similar information.

Every case study writer identified several positive implications for the future development of the File. Several projected that a larger and more comprehensive File would become an important national resource. The Illinois site manager suggested that a human resource file is a logical extension of further developments with the Practices File. The Wayne County site director indicated, "The NATL file's schemata, its conceptual approach is to be applauded and validated. The potential to select specific programs by a variety of approaches rapidly and specifically has immense promise for information centers such as ourselves. Should the NATL disappear, the needs would still exist. The information would be retreived at far greater cost in monies, time and accuracy".

2.7.4 SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

As the data and information from previous sections indicate, the pilot test of the Practices File was successful and yielded important recommendations for further refinement. This section provides a summary of the pilot test operations and evaluation findings and a discussion of implications for future expansion of the File.

Generally, the pilot sites experiences a high degree of success in establishing operational use of the Practices File. Usage figures were particularly high during the latter three months of the test period (September, October and November). As discussed above, the major problems indicated by the sites were those of file size and brevity of time in the actual pilot test period. In spite of these limitations, site managers were able to provide and effectively integrate into their respective sites an ongoing service that included the National Education Practices File. The existence of an established information service capability as one of the site selection criteria contributed to the early start-up success and active pilot test period.

It is important to note that the close of the pilot test period, although anticipated by the sites, may have too abruptly interrupted a viable service offered by the sites. Several site managers indicated that they actually had only three months of use and were unhappy that the service was stopped during the middle of the school year. Most site managers asked that their sites be involved in any continuation of File activities. (BRS has offered several alternatives to NIE for maintaining pilot site access to the test File pending decisions on the expansion and implementation of the File).

One unique aspect of the project was the selection of an urban district (Atlanta) where an existing dissemination capability was not present. This exception was made in order to determine the feasibility of start-up and potential usage of the Practices File in an urban setting. The urban site selection criteria required evidence of school improvement programs where priorities/missions were established and support staff were available, thus enabling this urban component of the project to join rapidly in the pilot test network. Technical assistance was provided, with additional support offered in the areas of computer searching and transformation. BRS's experiences with the urban sites, particularly Atlanta, are documented in a separate Urban Site Report.

The pilot site network, comprising state education agencies, regional laboratories, intermediate agencies, urban districts, teacher centers, libraries, government agencies and an ERIC clearinghouse, combined to provide a viable test of the Practices File in a multi-setting of dissemination agencies. Information collected on the present and potential use of the Practices File is based upon this pro-active network of pilot sites as reported here. Each site has unique organizational and service delivery mechanisms indigenous to its specific structures and governance. Therefore, sites were examined through on-site discussions and several were documented in case studies.

On the basis of the data collected from both the pilot sites and practitioner users, it is clear that among both audiences, the concept of the Practices File is overwhelmingly supported, and that the efforts of the National Education Practices File Development Project have resulted in considerable progress toward making such a concept a functional reality. While a variety of operational problems were experienced during the pilot test, the fact that so many sites and users reported successful use of the Practices File provides strong support for the conclusion that the File is indeed technically feasible. Moreover, those problems which did occur are quite readily amenable to solutions.

The utility of the File as a mechanism for information gathering and dissemination is unquestionable, judging from the enthusiastic descriptions of File benefits provided by key personnel across all pilot sites. While the ultimate utility of this information for educational practitioners is unable to be determined at this time, their immediate reactions to Practices File search results are highly favorable and reflect a considerable amount of perceived value. These data, taken as a whole, strongly suggest that the Practices File, even in its current state of development, is meeting its primary goal of making information on educational practices accessible to persons who need and want it. Clearly, the feedback from both pilot sites and practitioners presents a compelling argument for continued development and expansion of the File in order to meet the perceived future needs and anticipations of current users and the broader educational community.

In addition to the overwhelmingly positive reaction to the Practices File by both site staff and users, the data strongly supports the more important notion that the File is an essential component of the school/classroom practice improvement model. Data reflecting purposes of File usage by practitioner groups consistently show program development, curriculum development and classroom instruction as the primary use purposes. These purposes fall directly within the realm of school/classroom practice improvement efforts. That fact, coupled with the positive feedback regarding use of the Practices File, and the high likelihood of continued use, provide clear evidence of the utility of the File for these school/classroom practice improvement efforts.

These data represent a partial refinement of the theoretical resource base/linker/client paradigm in that they identify what resources (the Practices File), delivered through which linkages (pilot site types), reach the practitioner in the most positive way. Although further impact data must be collected as the Practices File is expanded, the preliminary evidence indicates that the Practices File is best suited to those who engage in the conduct and improvement of educational practice at the local district level. Further, the data suggests that the closer the access to the Practices File is to the practicing educator, the more likely that target group will use it effectively for school and classroom improvement efforts.

This preliminary observation is supported by the limited pilot test experience. On an individual site basis, the Mid-Coast Teachers' Center in Maine demonstrated the greatest service usage during the pilot test period. It is interesting to note that the Maine site has the smallest service audience of all the fourteen sites. More importantly, access to the service in Maine is the most direct and requires the least amount of intermediary "stops" or referral points between user and service. This generally would be true of services located parallel (organizationally) to the users rather than several bureaucratic steps above the user. This is reinforced by the fact that the Minnesota Teacher Center ranked third and, if corrected to equalize for pilot site participatory time, the two urban sites of Washington, D.C., and Atlanta ranked fourth and fifth.

The Illinois SEA ranked second, testimony to the experience and sophistication of the service delivery system developed in that State over several years. In that regard, it is of interest to note that the two teacher centers had no operating information services prior to the pilot test.

At the low end of the usage scale, the Southwest Regional Exchange demonstrated the least amount of usage. The ERIC Clearinghouse for Science, Mathematics and Environmental Education and the Wayne County (Michigan)

Intermediate Agency ranked twelfth and thirteenth, respectively.

Certainly, the limited pilot test cannot provide conclusive support for the generalizations suggested here regarding usage. Many intervening variables, uncontrolled by the project, undoubtedly account for much of the variation. In many cases, the level of commitment of both individuals and organizations was a key factor.

The observation that File usage is correlated negatively to the "number of stops" between user and service deserves further study. The fact that the four sites whose service is located closest (in most respects) to the user all demonstrated usage in the upper half of the ranking (among the first five of fourteen places), replicates previous research in this area - information flows through the least line of resistance. Only when there is in place a well-managed remote delivery system that reduces resistance over longer geographic and bureaucratic distances is usage high. This observation is supported by the level of use demonstrated by Illinois, the Northwest Regional Exchange and the University of Missouri - Kansas City Library.

If this phenomenon were observed in other instances, it would argue for locating such services as close to the potential users as is possible, either physically or through well-publicized, efficient, remote service delivery points.

This information is not new, nor was the project intended to be a formal research study of these factors. It does, however, support previous findings, although no controls were in place to monitor the impact of the variety of other variables that come into play.

Several other evaluation findings and pilot test experiences have implications for future modifications and expansion of the pilot test. These are discussed briefly here and integrated into the Implementation and Management Plan for the Future Expansion of the Practices File.

- Policies and procedures with respect to the inclusion of commercial programs and practices in the File remain undeveloped. While efforts to explore the feasibility of their inclusion met with little success, it is necessary to continue efforts in this area.

- It is important to distinguish between factors related directly to the File and factors related to the search system or to the limited pilot test.

- The Practices File is not a complete dissemination system or program, merely a key component. No amount of technical improvement in the File can compensate for inadequate management, leadership or linkage activities.

- The suggestions made by site managers regarding the format of abstracts and the contents of the information (see Evaluation Results, page 35) must be viewed in light of the role that NIE might play in the future development of the File. While it is possible to move toward more standardization of formats, field limits and documentation requirements, these steps will require a pro-active and aggressive role for NIE which may be rejected by collaborating programs.

- The issue of source documentation remains unresolved. It may be necessary to try out some form of documentation center for microfilming and providing fiche and hard copy of source documents. Other alternatives for reduction, storage and retrieval should also be explored such as the application of video disc.

- The size and scope of the File should be expanded as soon as practical. The field test period should be lengthened to a minimum of nine months and overlap with the school year.

- Expand the evaluation of the Practices File to verify pilot test findings and to address questions of utilization and impact. Because of the brief pilot test period, these variables were not investigated fully, although preliminary and sketchy data indicates that utilization and impact on classroom practice may be relatively high.

- Based on site managers' comments, it appears that evaluation information needs to be included about each program or practice, but that lack of validation or of "success" should not keep a program out of the File. Instead, it is necessary to include as wide a range of practices as possible, assuring that adequate documentation is available for users to make informed judgments. Users' assessments of the File support the criticality of adequate information about performance.

- The current agency and programmatic environment for fully assimilating a fully developed Practices File as a critical problem-solving tool is very accepting. The further development of the File must be undertaken expeditiously to take full advantage of this momentum.

APPENDIX A

PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF APPLICANT SITES

National Education Practices File Development Project

Pilot Test--Preliminary Survey

October 1, 1978

Preliminary Survey of Applicant Sites

Site ______________________ Site Manager ______________________

Address ______________________ Telephone ______________________

______________________ Information Specialist: ______________________

1. Briefly describe the existing files of curriculum and programs at your site.

____

____

____

____

____

2. What search activities do you perform? (Manual/computer) Describe briefly:

____

____

____

____

3. What are the primary data bases that you search by computer?

___ERIC ___State or local files ___Dissertation Index

___Aim/Arm ___NIMIS ___NTIS

List up to three others that you may be using that are either computerized or manual: (example: National ASCD)

____

____

____

4. How do you presently search to retrieve curriculum, program, or practice information?

____

____

____

5. Do you have persons on your staff who have had specific training in computerized search and retrieval of educational data bases?

If yes, how many?______________________________

Where did they receive their training?
____on the job
____formal course work (graduate or undergraduate) in specific computer search technique
____seminars held by the major data base suppliers (which ones?)

6. What is your estimate of the type of training you would require in order to utilize the educational program and practice file prepared by Bibliographic Retrieval Services, Inc.? (content-specific or system mechanics or both)

____
____
____
____
____

7. What current hardware are you using for computer searching?

(type of computer; teletype or CRT; etc.)

____
____
____
____

8. Approximately how many hours per month are you presently utilizing the information data bases you indicated in question 3 above?

____

9. Estimate the number of searches that you conduct in a typical month? (Include computer searches and an estimate of discrete requests that are searched manually) ______________________________

What percentage of these searches are related to curriculum, program or practice types of information? ______________________________

Do you include source documents with these searches?

microfiche____ journal articles____ other hard-copy____

10. Which target audiences are your primary clients in the educational community?

___teachers

___other practitioners

___parents

___OTHER________________

___schools or LEAs

___policy boards (state, county, local)

___administrators (central office)

___students

___State Department

11. Which of these target audiences would have greatest need for an educational program and practice file?

12. What forms of diffusion are you presently using for awareness purposes in informing these target groups about informational resources and educational data bases?

13. What types of inservice or other training activities (workshops, seminars, field visits, etc.) do you utilize to inform target groups about the educational data bases available to them or to apprise practitioners of curriculum, programs, or practices from these data bases?

14. Briefly describe any other types of user services that would be relevant to utilization of an educational program and practice file:(i.e., methods you are currently using that would be applicable to this pilot test of the EP File.)

15. If you were selected as a pilot test site for the EP (educational program and practice) File, what specific goals would you have for reaching your target groups who will be utilizing the information?

16. Describe briefly the information management, computer retrieval and dissemination capabilities of your staff and organization: (append an organizational capability statement and one or two staff resumes if you wish.)

17. Are there any other features of your organization that we should be aware of? (facilities, resources, specific target groups, unique strengths or capabilities.)

18. Should your organization be selected as a site for the pilot test of the EP File, would you be willing to participate in the necessary logging and data collection procedures as required once these minimal requirements are explained to you? (log data, interview, evaluation form) *

Person completing this form--signature

[*] Please attach any current log forms or evaluative forms that you are presently using for recording search requests or collective evaluative data.

APPENDIX B

PILOT SITE TRAINING SESSION AGENDA

NATIONAL EDUCATION PRACTICES FILE
DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

AGENDA
April 15-17
Louisville, Kentucky

Monday, April 16

1:00 - 1:30	WELCOME AND PROJECT OVERVIEW - AN OVERVIEW OF AGENDA; MATERIALS PACKET - GREG BENSON, BRS
1:30 - 2:45	SITE INFORMATION EXCHANGE - THE SITES WILL EXCHANGE INFORMATION ON THEIR RESPECTIVE OPERATIONS - CHARLES MOJKOWSKI and DICK LAVIN
2:45 - 3:30	COMPUTER DEMONSTRATION OF PRACTICE FILE - PRELIMINARY DEMONSTRATION - GREG BENSON
3:30 - 5:00	OUTLINE OF TECHNICAL PROCEDURES - ED HANCOCK, BRS

Tuesday, April 17

8:30 - 10:30	PRESENTATIONS RELATIVE TO AWARENESS/MARKETING, SERVICE AGREEMENTS AND EVALUATION. A. DEVELOPING AWARENESS MATERIALS - A REVIEW OF REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARENESS ACTIVITIES - DICK LAVIN, MEC B. EVALUATIVE PROCEDURES AND FORMS - REVIEWING ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURES - ANN POLLINGER, MAGI
10:30 - 12:00	TECHNICAL PROCEDURES - REVIEW DETAILS USING BRS MANUAL (TUTORIAL) - ED HANCOCK
12:00 - 1:00	LUNCH
1:00 - 1:30	ANNOUNCEMENTS: HOUSEKEEPING DETAILS
1:30 - 2:30	SHARING OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES PILOT SITES - DICK LAVIN AND CHARLES MOJKOWSKI
2:30 - 4:00	COMPUTER DEMONSTRATION - SEARCHES CONDUCTED USING INDIVIDUAL PROCEDURES - ED HANCOCK
4:30	WRAP-UP - ADJOURNMENT - NEXT STEPS

APPENDIX C

ORIENTATION AND TRAINING AGENDAS FOR ATLANTA

ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

LOCAL FACILITATION SESSION

September 25, 1979
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

A. REVIEW WITH LOCAL FACILITATOR OPERATIONAL PLANS FOR UTILIZATION OF SYSTEM

1. *Terminal Locations*
2. *Operators Trained*
3. *Forms Required/Developed*
4. *Assistance Desired*

B. REVIEW AWARENESS STEPS

1. *Development of Materials*
2. *School Visits*
3. *System-wide Meetings*
4. *Utilization Strategies*

C. REVIEW ATLANTA EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

1. *Research Associate's/Assistant Priorities*
2. *Organizational use of RA's*
3. *Relationship of Research to Other Program Areas Internal and External to the System*

D. REVIEW EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. *Monthly Reports*
2. *User Appraisal Forms*
3. *End of Project Interviews*
4. *Case Study Information*

ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

GENERAL SESSION

September 26, 1979

9:00 - 12:00

A. OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL PRACTICES FILE - GREG BENSON

1. *Purposes*
2. *Progress to Date*

B. NETWORK OF PILOT SITES - DICK LAVIN

1. *Site Characteristics*
2. *Urban Districts*
3. *Communication Exchanges*

C. REVIEW OF EVALUATION QUESTIONS - CHARLES MOJKOWSKI

1. *Site Information*
2. *User Information*

D. APPLICATION OF FILE(S) TO SCHOOL DISTRICT PRIORITIES - DICK LAVIN
JEAN SANDERS

1. *Information for Program Development and Decision Making*
2. *Program Elements in Educational Improvement*
   - public involvement
   - special requirements
   - types of programs
   - participants
   - activities
   - staffing
   - organization
   - physical needs/ facilities
   - administration

E. PROCEDURES FOR ACCESSING FILE - KAY EARNHARDT

F. QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

2

APPENDIX D

EVALUATION FORMS

1. Monthly Management Report
2. Final Assessment Interview Protocol
3. User Profile Information
4. Search Appraisal

Site ____________________

Month ____________________

MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT

National Education Practice File

I. ACTIVITIES

In Column A, place a check ( ) next to those activities conducted during the month. In Column B, indicate the degree to which you encountered problems in any activity by circling the appropriate number. (Leave blank if no problem was encountered.) In Column C, indicate for each activity in which you encountered problems, whether you were able to solve the problem by checking the appropriate response. Please provide comments in the area provided, particularly on the specifics of the major problems encountered.

1. Internal Operations

A		B					C	
	Activities	Problems					Solved?	
		minor				major	YES	NO
___	staff training	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	staff orientation	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	staff meetings	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	record keeping	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	logging data	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	reporting	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	other ________	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
	________	1	2	3	4	5	___	___

COMMENTS:

2. Awareness

	A	B					C	
	Activities	Problems					Solved?	
		minor				major	YES	NO
___	developing materials	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	distributing materials	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	processing responses	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	giving presentations	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	other ___________	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	___________	1	2	3	4	5	___	___

COMMENTS:

3. Conducting Searches

	A	B					C	
	Activities	Problems					Solved?	
		minor				major	YES	NO
___	processing requests	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	collecting user profile information	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	preparing search logic	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	conducting search	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	preparing search output for client	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	other ___________	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	___________	1	2	3	4	5	___	___

COMMENTS:

4. Follow-up Evaluation

A		B					C	
	Activities	Problems					Solved?	
		minor 1	2	3	4	major 5	YES	NO
___	responding to client questions	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	distributing search appraisal forms	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	collecting search appraisal forms	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	other ___________	1	2	3	4	5	___	___
___	___________	1	2	3	4	5	___	___

COMMENTS:

II. PERSONNEL HOURS REQUIRED

Activities		Professional Staff Hours		Clerical/Support Staff Hours
Internal Operations		________		________
Awareness		________		________
Conducting Searches		________		________
Follow-up/Evaluation		________		________
	TOTAL	________	TOTAL	________

COMMENTS:

III. NON-PERSONNEL COSTS

Activities	Item(s) Description	Amount
Internal Operations	____________	$ ________
	____________	________
	____________	________
Awareness	____________	________
	____________	________
	____________	________
Conducting Searches	____________	________
	____________	________
	____________	________
Follow-up/Evaluation	____________	________
	____________	________
	____________	________
	TOTAL AMOUNT	$ ________

COMMENTS:

IV. GENERAL COMMENTS: Please note below any additional comments on Practice File operations at your site during this month, including benefits derived by site personnel or users.

APPENDIX D : EVALUATION FORMS

Item 2

Final Assessment Interview Guide

I. FILE USAGE

1. Total number of Practices File Searches conducted ____
2. Total number of Search Appraisal Forms sent to clients ____
3. Total number of Search Appraisal Forms returned ____

II. BENEFITS

1. Key benefits of Practices File to site
2. Key benefits of Practices File to clients

III. ASSESSMENT OF FILE FEATURES

1. Content
    a. type of content to be included in file
        - validated vs. non-validated programs
        - practices vs. materials
        - commercial products

    b. importance of "quality control"

2. Abstract format
    a. adequacy of information provided
    b. items to be added
    c. items to be eliminated

IV. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

1. File problems
    a. technical problems with search procedures
    b. other file problems

2. Site operations problems, including awareness activities
3. Pilot test problems
4. Assessment of problems vs. benefits

V. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE USE

1. in file content
2. abstract format
3. technical procedures
4. user products/services

APPENDIX D, Item 3

USER PROFILE INFORMATION LIST

National Education Practice File

(To be collected at time of search request and entered on-line at information site

I. User Characteristics:

1. Name ________________________________

2. Address ________________________________

____

3. Phone Number Area Code (   ) ________________________

4. Search I.D. Number (first two digits identify site) ______

5. Date of Contact ________/________/________
Month Day Year

6. User's Position (Select the one category which best describes user's primary position.)

_____ 1. Elem./Sec. school teacher

_____ 2. Elem./Sec. school administrator

_____ 3. Other Elem./Sec. school personnel

_____ 4. Post-Secondary educational personnel

_____ 5. Intermediate service agency personnel

_____ 6. State education agency personnel

_____ 7. Other state agency personnel

_____ 8. Federal agency personnel

_____ 9. Student

_____10. Other (specify) ________________________

7. Has person used information services provided by this site prior to this particular request?

_____ 1. Never used services before

_____ 2. Services used once or twice before

_____ 3. Services used three or more times before

8. Was person aware of the existence of the Education Practice File prior to initiating this information search?

_____ 1. Yes

_____ 2. No

II. Request Characteristics:

9. Briefly state the problem about which the user is requesting information. Include both the user's need for information and the purpose for which the search results will be used. (Use no more than three lines of 72 characters each.)

____

____

____

10. Which of the following is the primary target group to which the information from this search will be applied? (Check one)

_____ 1. Students

_____ 2. Teachers, including paraprofessionals

_____ 3. Administrative personnel

_____ 4. Parents

_____ 5. Community groups

_____ 6. Other (specify) ______________________________

11. What is the user's intended scope of application for the results of this search?

_____ 1. One or several classrooms

_____ 2. A single school

_____ 3. A district or school system

_____ 4. Districts throughout a state

_____ 5. No direct application of results intended

_____ 6. Other (specify) ______________________________

APPENDIX D, Item 4 Search I.D. #: ______

SEARCH APPRAISAL FORM

National Education Practice File

1. Please rate the information provided through this search of the Education Practice File, according to each of the following aspects. For each item, please circle the number on the scale which best describes your judgment.

a. Extent to which material provided meets your original information needs.

1 2 3 4 5

meets all of my information needs — meets none of my information needs

b. Relevance of information provided to original problem or question.

1 2 3 4 5

all information relevant — none of the information relevant

c. "Newness" of information with reference to your knowledge before search.

1 2 3 4 5

all information new — none of the information new

d. Extent to which information appears to be accurate or credible.

1 2 3 4 5

appears highly credible — appears generall not credible

e. Adequacy of information provided for referral and follow-up.

1 2 3 4 5

highly adequate — highly inadequat

f. Adequacy of evaluative details provided (e.g., regarding student outcomes or other effects).

1 2 3 4 5

highly adequate — highly inadequate

g. Extent to which information provided is able to be shared with others.

1 ______ 2 ______ 3 ______ 4 ______ 5

excellent basis
for sharing

insufficient basi
for sharing

h. Usefulness of information provided in terms of degree of applicability or adaptability.

1 ______ 2 ______ 3 ______ 4 ______ 5

directly applicable
or adaptable

not generally appl
icable or adaptable

2. Please describe briefly the way(s) you foresee using the information provided by this search of the Education Practice File.

3. If the Education File service was not available, do you think you could have obtained information similar to what you received through other sources?

______ 1. Yes (Please Specify) ________________________

______ 2. No

______ 3. Do not know

4. If you have previously searched other information sources, how would you compare the Education Practice File service's product quality with that of other sources?

______ 1. No previous experience with other information sources

______ 2. Practice File's product quality superior to that of most other sources

______ 3. Practice File's product quality equal to that of most other sources

______ 4. Practice File's product quality inferior to that of most other sources

5. Do you feel you would be likely to use the Education Practice File service again?

_____ 1. Yes

_____ 2. No

_____ 3. Do not know

6. Would you use the Education Practice File if it involved a small cost to users?

_____ 1. Yes

_____ 2. No

_____ 3. Do not know

7. Would you recommend use of the Education Practice File to your colleagues?

_____ 1. Yes

_____ 2. No

_____ 3. Do not know

8. Which of the following statements best describes your awareness of the existence of this special file of educational practices and programs prior to making this information search request?

_____ 1. I was not aware of this practice file.

_____ 2. I was aware of the practice file through a brochure, newsletter or other written awareness material sent out from information site and/or central clearinghouse.

_____ 3. I was aware of the practice file through an awareness presentation (formal or informal) by information site or clearinghouse personnel.

_____ 4. I was aware of the practice file through an article or notice in newspaper or journal.

_____ 5. I was aware of the practice file through other source(s). Please specify ______________________

9. In the space provided below, please note any additional comments you may have about the search of the Education Practice File which was conducted pursuant to your information request. We are particularly interested in your suggestions of how this file might be maximally useful to educational practitioners.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION IN COMPLETING THIS FORM

PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED FORMS IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED TO THE SITE WHERE YOUR INFORMATION REQUEST WAS MADE.

NOTATIONS REGARDING USE

(Search Appraisal Form)

National Education Practice File

1. Forms will be printed in quantity (on brightly colored paper) and distributed to each information site at the outset of the pilot.

2. Use of this standard assessment form will be required of all pilot sites.

3. PF search output will be labeled separately from information yielded through search of other sources. This will be prefaced by an on-line print-out and/or a separate letter from the information site describing PF and calling attention to the Search Appraisal Form. (See sample Narrative Letter, attached)

4. The Search Appraisal Form will be attached to each search output, with search I.D. Number (including code number of pilot site) recorded on the top, right-hand corner by site personnel.

5. As explained in the narrative letter, (and reinforced on the form itself), users will return completed forms to the pilot site from which the request was made. Sites will then forward the forms to MAGI on a monthly basis.

SAMPLE NARRATIVE LETTER

(to accompany EPF Search Output)

Type on on-line and/or information site letterhead.

Dear [User]:

Because of the special nature of your information request, a separate search has been conducted of the National Education Practice File. This new file of educational practices and programs is being developed through a special project funded by the National Institute of Education. Its primary goal is to provide practitioners with ready access to information concerning new developments and exemplary practices in the field.

At this time, [name of information site] is one of several sites across the country at which an experimental practice file is being piloted. Following the pilot test, modifications of the file will be made, depending largely on the reactions of users. Therefore, we are most interested in getting your feedback to the attached information resulting from this Practice File search.

We ask that you examine the material and take a few minutes to complete the Search Appraisal Form which you will find on the last page. Please return the completed form directly to our office at the following address:

[Name and address of information site]

Your cooperation in this matter will help us to better meet your information needs in the future and will greatly enhance the ultimate utility of the National Education Practice File.

Cordially,

APPENDIX E

CASE STUDY PROTOCOL

National Education Practices File

Pilot Test Site

CASE STUDY PROTOCOL

Introduction

The purpose of the case study is to gather a concise description of the operation of the National Education Practices File in the pilot test sites. Three broad areas of information are required: 1) the organization in which the information service is operating; 2) the operations, services and linkages of the pilot site itself; and 3) the operation of the file. Further description on these categories is provided below.

The product should be in narrative form, organized according to the three major areas. Case writers should use individual judgment in the specific information provided and in the variables addressed. Questions provided under each section are meant as illustrations and guides. Each writer should identify other questions which might guide the development of the report. The goal is to depict the unique characteristics of the organization and the site. The length of the case report may vary according to the amount of information the writer feels is necessary to provide. Overall length should be approximately fifteen to twenty pages. Approximate percentages of narrative for each section are provided as guides only.

Case Study Protocol

I. The Organization (about 20 percent of the narrative)

Provide a brief sketch of the organization (i.e., SEA, ISA, LEA, IHE, Educational Lab) in which the information service is operating. Stress such variables as origin, history, governance, major functions, staffing patterns, facilities and funding sources.

Suggested Questions:

1. What does the organization define as its overall mission and goals?
2. What major functions does the organization perform?
3. a. How many professional staff work in the organization?

   b. How many of these professional staff provide dissemination services in the following two areas?

      ___ procuring, developing and transforming information resources

      ___ linking clients to information resources
4. Who does the organization serve?
5. What services does the organization provide?

II. Site Operations, Services and Linkages (about 30 percent of the narrative)

Provide a description of the operations of the site with particular emphasis on the linkages used and the services provided. Delineate resources used (people, data, organizations) as well as resources provided (people, data, organizations).

Suggested Questions:

1. What are the functions of the site (if distinct from those of the organization)?
2. How are clients identified?
3. Who are these clients?
4. On what client system are dissemination services primarily focused?

   ___ teaching-learning

   ___ leadership-management

   ___ policymaking

APPENDIX E (Continued)

5. How does the organization decide what dissemination services will be provided?

6. What dissemination services are provided?

7. What percentage of the total dissemination effort is allocated to the different categories of dissemiantion activities?

e.g.

Level	% of effort
Spread	
Exchange	
Choice	
Implementation	
Total	100%

8. How are dissemination services delivered to clients?

9. How does the organization finance its dissemination services?

10. Are there other dissemination programs operating within the organization?

11. If yes, how are these programs coordinated?

12. What other organizations provide dissemination services to the same clients?

13. How are these dissemination services coordinated?

14. What documentation is prepared about the site's operation?

15. What assessment information is collected?

16. What indicators of success does the organization use as criteria for assessing dissemination services?

17. How is evaluation information used to modify services?

III. Practices File Operations (about 50 percent of the narrative)

Describe in detail the operation of the Practices File and its relationship to other major programs operated by the site or the organization. Discuss the importance of the File (present and future) to the overall service role of the site and the organization to its clients, both potential and actual.

APPENDIX E (Continued)

Suggested Questions:

A. Operations

1. How is information from the Practices File provided to clients?

2. How, and to what extent, are Practices File operations incorporated with other dissemination services of the site?

B. Problems and Constraints

3. What operational problems and constraints are encountered in the use of the Practices File?

4. Are these problems and constraints unique to the site's operations or inherent in the File's operations?

5. How are these problems addressed? With what success?

C. Benefits

6. What benefits accrue to the site from the availability of the Practices File?

7. What benefits accrue to clients who receive information from the Practices File?

D. Implications

8. What impact does the availability of the Practices File have on such site functions as:

   a. building relationships with clients, particularly practitioners

   b. identifying clients' needs for information

   c. acquiring information resources which respond to needs

   d. selecting resources in responding to queries

   e. sustaining and maintaining service relationships

APPENDIX F

CASE STUDY REPORTS*

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*Most of the case study reports contained several pages of appendix material which, to reduce the size of this document, are not included. These materials are on file at BRS.

BRS *Bibliographic Retrieval Services, Inc.*

Corporation Park, Bldg. 702
Scotia, New York 12302
(518) 374-5011

CASE STUDY

National Education Practices File
Pilot Test

ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Prepared by: Dr. Jarvis Barnes

CASE STUDY RELATING TO THE USE OF NATIONAL EDUCATION PRACTICE FILE

The Atlanta Public School System celebrated its Centennial in 1972. As an independent school system rather than a county school system, it serves all the students who live within the city limits of Atlanta, the capitol city of Georgia.

Historically and educationally, the system has been a leader in the Southeast. It has had grades K through 12 for more than fifty years, while changing from a K-6-3-3 organizational plan in 1947 to a K-7-5-V. The former plan was begun in 1922. For the last several years, the School System has operated middle schools serving students in grades 6, 7, and 8. Approximately half of the students are in a middle-school setting. The Board of Education will make a decision at the end of FY'80 concerning the future of the development of middle schools in the School System.

The enrollment in Atlanta has been relatively stable with increases being caused by annexation and the increased birthrate during the postwar periods. The maximum enrollment of approximately 120,000 students was reached in 1967. The decline has been relatively steady until currently, approximately 73,000 students are enrolled. Atlanta is located in two counties, Fulton and DeKalb. This physical uniqueness has caused annexation to be only in Fulton County. No region has been annexed in the DeKalb region for over 50 years. The declining enrollment has been brought about by the expansion of business, the construction of expressways, the development of urban renewal sites, and the exodus from inner-city areas which characterize many of the larger cities.

Atlanta has a unique reputation. Its various publics have worked together in a harmonious fashion to make Atlanta the hub of the Southeast and a leader in air transportation. Civic, cultural, business, and educational groups come together frequently to discuss plans, to solve problems, as well as to enjoy each other's southern hospitality. The School System has profited from this interaction and has a relatively high level of participation by the public in decision making.

The School System is a highly decentralized decision-making organization. Some of its nine Board members are elected by the wards in which they reside; and others, by a city-wide ballot. The administration of the School System consists of three levels: central, area, and school. The central staff is basically service in that it does not directly administer programs. The system is divided into three administrative, geographical areas under the direction of an area superintendent. The local school is under the direction of the principal who receives assistance from various leadership teams composed of faculty, students, and community representatives. The Superintendent's Cabinet is composed of associate, assistant, and area superintendents. In general, policy-making decisions are approved by the Cabinet prior to submission to the Board. General administrative regulations are also processed through the Cabinet in order to maximize efficient decision making and effective operation of the School System.

Among the central service divisions is the Division of Research, Evaluation, and Data Processing. The three chief functions -- research, evaluation, and data processing -- are integrated units and are performed by three main types of personnel: research associates, research assistants, and the Director of Data Processing. Each individual provides central and local school services. The central service is in the nature of specific programs or responsibility while the local service is that which develops by being assigned to render technical services to local schools. The number of schools assigned varies from two to ten, depending on the extent of central programmatic services.

The leadership of the Division of Research, Evaluation, and Data Processing operates as a team. They serve as facilitors in determining the most effective monitoring procedures and the most effective utilization of information and data directed toward the accomplishment of the goals of the Division and the School System. Their performance responsibilities are both supervisory and functional. The supervisory responsibilities relate to supervising the supportive statistical, clerical, and data processing personnel. The functional responsibilities include determining and conducting evaluation procedures and activities for programs and the preparation of reports; monitoring current programs for operational effectiveness and adherence to guidelines and making recommendations for improvement; developing ideas with various groups and writing proposals; determining the significant relationships between the projected course of action taken during program implementation; monitoring the testing activities and providing technical assistance to teachers and other staff members regarding test data interpretation, use, and presentation to the public and parents; determining the need for supplementary and/or compensatory programs; and the collecting of financial and personnel comparability data to ensure maintenance of comparability among schools.

The Division is highlighting the following services during the 1979-80 school year in order to support and promote continued improvement of pupil achievement and of school management by:

1. Providing technical assistance to school faculties for:
    a. Facilitating the implementation of the revised testing program.
    b. Assisting them with test administration and interpretation and with use of test data from both published and teacher-made tests.
    c. Analyzing data, trends, conditions, and cause-and-effect relationships related to reading, composition, and mathematics.
    d. Periodically reviewing efforts and documentation associated with activities designed to accomplish the System-Wide Objectives.
    e. Evaluating pupil achievement.
    f. Identifying issues which need to be resolved and assisting design plans in order to promote pupil achievement.
2. Evaluating compensatory programs financed by state and federal funds as well as selected programs financed by general funds.
3. Identifying and disseminating information about factors and/or programs which, according to related literature or local results, seem to promote improved achievement and organizational functions.
4. Continuing the longitudinal case study of selected individual, school, home/community, and peer group variables in order to determine the influence of the selected variables on achievement.
5. Serving as liaison with:
    a. Various funding agencies in order to identify possible sources of funds.

b. Local divisions in order to develop proposals to obtain compensatory/ supplementary programs.

c. Governmental agencies to document compliance with guidelines.

6. Continuing to assist in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Pupil Progression Policy and the Educational Management System.

7. Maintaining and updating a computerized data bank which facilitates evaluation of pupil progress, maintenance of comparability, preparation of various reports, decision making, and management of information.

8. Promoting and refining data processing techniques and procedures which facilitate and promote instructional and administrative decision making.

The operation of the Atlanta Public School System is supported basically from ad valorem taxes. The FY'80 budget is $132,436,914. Local taxes support 56.0% of the budget while State revenue amounts to 40.3%. Currently, there are approximately 8,000+ employees who are serving the 73,000 students in 126 schools. There are two classifications of employees: certificated (4,404) and classified (1,680). The certificated include teachers, principals, administrative, and supervisory personnel, while the classified includes the supportive personnel such as clerical, maintenance, operations, and food services.

The Division of Research, Evaluation, and Data Processing has 81 employees of which 21 are certificated; 11, stenographic and word processing; and 49, data processing personnel. The FY'80 budget for the Division of Research, Evaluation, and Data Processing is ($2,999,127). Approximately 50% of the research and evaluation activities are financed by local funds; the remaining portion, by specially funded projects.

Functionally, the Division of Research, Evaluation, and Data Processing is in a unique position to influence decision making. All programs are ultimately to be evaluated. Each evaluation is supposed to identify issues and concerns. The Superintendent and his Cabinet, in turn, make assignments for resolutions to be pursued and presented to the Cabinet. The issues and concerns are then placed into the management system and are pursued until there is an appropriate solution or disposition.

Paralleling evaluation, the technical assistance rendered to the local schools is a means of assisting each school in analyzing and diagnosing its trends and concerns. Analysis of longitudinal data, relationships, disposition of previous recommendations, promising practices identified elsewhere within the system as well as in other locations throughout the country are extensively studied in order locally to design and develop corrective plans. Each research assistant and associate is responsible for leading each local school into the formulation of a corrective action plan which will enable the local school to pursue specific corrective operations based on data which seem to be likely to yield success. The research assistant and associate work with the instructional personnel (resource teachers) who is similarly assigned to each local school and who represents the area office. Consequently, there are two people who are external to each school but who are very familiar with the operations of each school and who serve as a companion to review the progress which is being made under the direction of the principal and that of the local leadership team. Monitoring of the progress is the responsibility of the local personnel. Review of the progress is the responsibility of the two externally assigned individuals. Consequently, each school has a team which is composed of central, area, and local personnel all working toward the development of improved achievement. (Note:

Reading achievement in the Atlanta Public School System has increased approximately 10 per cent during each of the last three consecutive years; hence, the downward trend in achievement has been thwarted, and now the upward trend is evident.)

While the research assistants and associates are working closely with the local schools in the formulation of plans to improve achievement, it is imperative that exemplary practices and results of research be accessible. Hence, the research assistant and associate serve as a linkage to scan the various related literature and published documents and relate this information to the needs of the local school. Consequently, the review of research-based findings are presented in an action-oriented environment which frequently results in influencing decision making. Information concerning instructional procedures, media, involvement of parents, learning theories, evaluation, and many similar factors' are basic to the improvement of instruction. In addition to the information being used by the local school, the research-based information is a means and a cause for many staff members to seek and develop their own creative approaches or to direct, promote, or change their professional growth processes, formally or informally.

In addition to working at the local site, the research assistant and associate are responsible for the development of information concerning problems being pursued by central staff members or by the School System in general. Some of these relate to such as evaluation of personnel, use of the computer in advancing critical thinking in the classroom, organizational management procedures and components, promotional policies, and many other topics which are used in reaching decisions for recommendation of policy to the Board of Education. The Division of Research, Evaluation, and Data Processing serves as the representative to the Cabinet and other divisions to assist in obtaining information and data which might be important in formulating decisions. One of the research assistants has the responsibility for leadership and development in this effort.

A basic problem which has evidenced itself during the last several years while using the review of related literature and the search of ERIC documents is that the professionals in the school system tend to seek such assistance only when they are enrolled in some academic pursuit. The function of the Division of Research, Evaluation, and Data Processing has been changing this emphasis. Increasingly, professional leaders are asking, "What is being done elsewhere?" "What really does make a difference?" "What does research say?" Research assistants and associates are challenging the local faculties as they develop their plans of action. The development of a plan from the "hip pocket" is no longer adequate. The chances of success must be enhanced. Consequently, there is the need for high level professional research at all three levels of the school system: central, area, and local.

The local Professional Library which is located within the Division of Learning Resources is vital to the System as a catalyst for pursuing professional literature. The majority of the System's information resources comes from the extensive periodical collection, educational books, and publications housed in this facility. Teachers and other practitioners in the school district obtain information through direct contact with Library staff. Administrative personnel within the School System also have access to ERIC search services performed by the State Department of Education.

As the research associates and assistants and area resource teachers work with the leadership teams in the local schools on activities directed to System-wide objectives or individual school improvement plans, these activities serve as a major focal point and integrating mechanism for the dissemination services. The introduction of the Practices File to this existing dissemination service has broadened the scope of information resources.

At this writing, experience with the Practices File has been limited in both quantity and quality. The service has been in operation for only two months, much of which was spent in training retrieval staff to search the File. To date, only 44 searches have been made of the File. In addition, the system for promoting the use of the File and for applying information to System-wide objectives and individual school's improvement efforts is in a very early stage of development. For these reasons, discussions of system procedures, constraints, benefits, and implications are based as much on projections of future activities as they are on past and present experiences.

At present, the primary channel for communicating requests for the Practices File is through the research associates and assistants assigned to each school in the district. A less used but expanding channel is through the area resource teachers also assigned to each school. Since the research assistants and associates and the resource teachers often work as a team in providing assistance to school personnel, requests are made to the information center by both groups. Additional clients who have begun to request Practices File search services include the subject matter specialists from the Division of Instructional Planning and Development and specialists from the Division of Student/Community Services.

Information requests to the Division of Research, Evaluation, and Data Processing which come out of these activities are channeled to the intermediaries who query the information center where resources from the Professional Library are combined with computer searches of ERIC, the Practices Files, and other data bases. For those services in which information from the Practices File is provided, the user is asked to complete a Search Appraisal Form indicating initial reactions to the utility of the File.

The limited experience with the Practices File has yielded a few problems or constraints which, if addressed, would improve its utility and impact. Some of these problems are related directly to the Practices File and some arise from the general conditions of operations in the Atlanta Public Schools. In the first category, we have encountered a need to know more about the sources of information in the File. This is particularly the case with the major programmatic sources such as the National Diffusion Network and ESEA, Title IV-C. It would be helpful for both information center personnel and intermediaries to know about the Joint Dissemination Review Panel process and the operations of the NDN. Some general description of the validation procedures used by the Title IV-C programs also would be helpful.

A second area in which more information would be helpful is with respect to the availability of materials. While the File might contain citations for which no additional information (in print or through consultation) is available, as well as citations for which back-up, more complete documentation and consultation is available, it is hard to determine this from the abstract. An explicit statement that no information beyond the abstract is available might be helpful on those citations where this is the case. With respect to the Title IV-C projects, where dissemination is handled through the state directors, a list of these directors and their telephone numbers would help in procuring additional information.

A related constraint in the use of the information in the Practices File is the time required to obtain additional information. This constraint is more difficult because we do not have staff in the information center who can provide follow-up services to clients once the initial search has been reviewed and additional information is required about one or two programs or practices. Thus, it may take several days or weeks to obtain available documentation on the program or practice. In general, we have been able to accommodate these constraints in our initial usage of the File and feel the advantages outweigh these problems.

Our limited experience with the File is mixed with our experience as a relatively new user of computerized search services in general. While the research associate and assistant and the resource teachers have used ERIC previously, school practitioners generally have not. Our experience is that both ERIC and the Practices File are useful, but in different ways. The Practices File appears to be more directly applicable to the programmatic information needs eminating from the school improvement activities being undertaken by school staff. Thus, while ERIC can provide a large number of references which are related to nearly every topic, there are times when the Practices File has little or no information. The difference is that, when the Practices File does yield references addressed to the area of concern, those references are more directly applicable to the information need.

Although the benefits of a Practices File are substantial and generalizable across a variety of sites and users, we feel the File is particularly applicable to our present efforts in Atlanta. This is so because we have developed what amounts to a powerful context for the utilization of program and practice information: System-wide objectives and a process for identifying, for and with school personnel, the most pressing teaching/learning and school management needs of each school; a cadre of skilled professionals who can provide a range of support services, including interpretation and application of test information, analysis of program deficiencies and development of program improvement activities. At the district level, programmatic information is likely always to be useful, but the context for promoting application of that information will determine the degree of impact. We have established a context which will result in a high degree of use and resulting impact.

One general constraint which impacts on our ability to use the Practices File and related information files is our lack of staff to implement comprehensive information services. It is our experience that many large urban districts do not have a capacity to provide such services, particularly the retrieval of information from computerized data bases. The Practices File has prompted our district to examine the possibility of establishing such services and providing assistance to research associates, resource teachers, and other support services personnel in using such information in their day-to-day work with principals and teachers.

The value of the assistance provided by support services personnel is measured by their usefulness to teachers and principals and by their contributions to the development of programs and activities which address identified System-wide and individual school priorities. The Practices File can serve as a valuable tool for research associates and assistants and resource teachers. Computer searches of the Practices File also can be used directly with and by teachers in such settings as inservice workshops, curriculum development committees and problem-solving sessions. As the File grows in both scope and size, teachers will be able to obtain on-the-spot information which can be adapted to their own efforts.

Most dissemination services established to date have been placed outside of local school districts and have experienced the difficulties of having to cross the political, social, and organizational boundaries in order to impact on the school and classroom. By having a Practices File within the district, we have not had to deal with boundary problems and can concentrate our energies on information provision and application. We hope to continue the use of this resource to support our ongoing school improvement activities.

Division of Research, Evaluation, and Data Processing
December 7, 1979

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CASE STUDY

National Education Practices File
Pilot Test

MID-COAST TEACHERS' CENTER

Prepared by: Ms. Sally Vogel
Ms. Deborah Pietro

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I

THE ORGANIZATION

School Administrative District #56, an LEA, is a local Maine School Administrative District which is the fiscal agent for the site. The 12 member Board of Directors is composed of representatives elected by registered voters in the towns of Searsport, Stockton Springs and Frankfort. The Board of Directors is charged under Maine Statutes with providing an appropriate education for all children 5-18 living in these towns. The Board has formulated the purpose of such an education in the philosophy which is stated below.

"Educational Philosophy

1. Education should contribute to the learner's physical and emotional well-being, especially to a sense of personal worth and to a capacity for influencing one's own destiny.

2. Education should develop in each learner the basic skills needed for communications, perception, evaluation, and understanding of ideas. Among the most important are reading, writing, speaking, listening, visual and computational skills.

3. Education should provide for each learner access to man's cultural heritage, stimulate a desire for knowledge and promote intellectual development.

4. Education should expand and advance the humane dimensions of all learners, especially by helping them to identify and cultivate their own spiritual, moral, and ethical values and attitudes, as well as accept and understand the humane dimensions of others.

5. Education should provide each learner with knowledge of the balance between man and his environment and develop attitudes and behavior leading to the intelligent use of the environment.

6. Education should provide the learner with the skills, experience and attitudes, and the guidance for initial job placement.

7. Education should provide each learner with varied opportunities to nurture interests, to discover and develop natural talents, and to express values and feelings through various media.

8. Education should provide for more cooperation between parents and teachers."

The Board of Directors hired Superintendent Lionel Sutfin in August of 1978 to administer 4 elementary schools, a junior high and a high school. There are four other administrators, 2 elementary principals, a high school principal and assistant principal and a director of services for exceptional children. The system has 65 professional teachers and 24 support personnel.

The professional staff includes 2 librarians and a guidance counselor who collect resources. These are mainly resources for student clients rather than teachers.

The organization provides services for children. The services include education, health screening and career information. Some services are also provided for community members in adult education classes.

Vocational education for students is provided at a regional site. The Regional Vocational Board includes representatives of S.A.D. #56's Board of Directors.

In submitting the proposal for MCTC, S.A.D. 56 joined with other schools and school districts to provide a regional service for teachers and other school personnel.

II

SITE OPERATIONS, SERVICES AND LINKAGES

The site (Mid-Coast Teachers' Center) is a federally funded teachers' center which provides services to school personnel in 5 M.S.A.D's, and 4 C.S.D's and the 3 private schools in Mid-Coast Maine (See Appendix 1.) It is located in Rockport, Maine.

In accordance with the legislation, (Public Law 94-482) the MCTC goals and objectives were designed to provide opportunities for teachers to do research, participate in training activities, and develop curriculum. MCTC's goals focus on relating these activities to the needs of handicapped and gifted students in regular classroom programs (See appendix 2).

A collaborative Policy Board is the decision making body of MCTC. The Policy Board includes representatives from elementary and secondary regular education, vocational education, special education, higher education, school boards, administration and private schools. Regular classroom teachers constitute a majority of the Policy Board.

MCTC has four staff members: a Director, a Coordinator of Information Support Services, an Educational Resources Specialist, and a Secretary. Another staff position, Special Education Information Specialist, has just been established. Funds for this position are coming from a BEH grant awarded to the Maine SEA for implementation of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development required in PL 94-142.

Eligible clients include all school personnel in the participating districts plus community members and agencies working through school people. MCTC gets lists of these people from each participating district or they are referred through school personnel. Therefore, primary focus is on teaching and learning.

The Policy Board specified certain dissemination activities in the grant objectives. Decisions about changing or adding other activities are made by the Policy Board on the recommendation of its standing or ad hoc committees. Their recommendations are related to teachers' expressed needs. These committees include Policy Board members and other volunteer teachers. The Standing Committees are: Publicity, Program, Materials, and Information Services.

DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

Dissemination activities have included or do include Teachers' Center awareness and needs assessments in each of the schools, a lending library of professional and instructional materials, a monthly newsletter, fliers about special programs, newspaper articles, a variety of training programs (workshops, mini-courses, institutes), as well as informal gatherings at the Teachers' Center . MCTC also offers a computerized information support service (ISS) and is developing a local resource base so that teachers can select instructional materials on the basis of specific student characteristics . The ISS includes the process for obtaining search requests, the actual searching, disseminating printouts, awareness material and evaluation forms, and the ordering and dissemination of microfiche, journal reprints and paper copies. Further explanation of this service will be completed in the third section with special reference given to integration of the Practices File.

The resource base developed differently. There was an initial meeting of interested practitioners to determine how materials could be selected according to student needs. They decided that a local computerized resource base would be developed since no resource base existed which met this need. In June of 1979 a smaller group of practitioners met to decide on the actual descriptors for the resource base. Those descriptors and the final data transfer forms were soon completed (See Appendix 3). The flow chart further explains the set-up of this resource base(MCTC). (See Appendix 4)

The emphasis of MCTC is on actual instructional materials, those primarily which are teacher made and/or teacher evaluated. Shortly after the completion of the necessary form, teachers were trained to abstract information onto these forms. This training is really professional development because the teacher must be familiar with how a material is used in order to code it properly. The training is ongoing and incentive money is available to pay teachers to do this. Audiovisuals from all of our districts are also being entered into MCTC.

The concept here is that practitioners will be able to share materials which they have made or used in their classrooms. This sharing is being accomplished in such a way that practitioners themselves have actually decided on the descriptors to be used, have described the materials themselves and are making their materials available to others at certain times of the year. This concept is today a reality. MCTC was available for computer access October 1st. The content is limited now but continues to grow constantly. The data base is now being tested and appears to work as it was intended. The materials sharing will fit in with the already existing pick-up and delivery service which will be described later. A policy for sharing has been developed and has already been approved by one of our school boards (See Appendix 5). In the future, MCTC will probably be our most useful local informational source and then could be expanded State-wide as there is also a real need to consolidate educational information in this State.

Dissemination activities which are of the Spread type include mailings, newspaper articles, posters, newsletters, and awareness presentations. (See appendix 6) These constitute approximately 15%.

Exchange activities include the information service, phone requests of the library and needs assessments where one party seeks something and an initial reply is given in response, and newsletters which have tear-offs. These constitute 25% of the dissemination activity.

Choice activities include courses, workshops, developing the MCTC resource base, and the selection of materials to be ordered as part of the ISS or for those selecting materials from or for the library. Both exchange and choice activities involve voluntary participation but those included in Choice have participants make a selection from a variety of options, i.e., which book, course, or fiche to take or order. Choice constitutes 45% of the dissemination activity.

Implementation activities involve follow-up to utilize information. Plans are currently underway to select and train some teachers to provide direct assistance to others in their own buildings. MCTC staff has provided direct assistance in making materials, coding materials, and in developing grant proposals. Follow-up sessions to courses include a study group, lesson plan booklet, and teachers training other teachers. 15% of dissemination is implementation.

DELIVERY OF SERVICES

Face to face contact, delivery and pick-up at each school on a regularly scheduled basis, telephone, and media are used in the dissemination process. Participants may drop in at the Center or attend scheduled training sessions or formal/informal meetings. Needs assessments and ISS presentations are/were held at staff meetings in the individual schools. Computer search packets, microfiche, instructional materials, books and newsletters are delivered weekly to each school by an MCTC staff member who also picks up search requests and materials to be returned. Requests may also be made by calling the Center directly. Announcements and articles about Center and school activities appear frequently in the local papers.

Most of these activities are funded with OE Teacher Center grant funds. Additional funding will be provided for statewide dissemination of special education information by the BEH CSPD grant to the SEA. The Maine State Department of Educational and Cultural Services (MEDECS) has submitted a proposal to NIE for statewide dissemination. Should this proposal be funded MCTC is slated to be a regional model for dissemination in the State of Maine.

No other agency provides this kind of service to people in the local area. Courses are offered by Mid-Coast Community College Services, a branch of the University of Maine at Augusta. A directory of these is included as a supplement in the local papers three times a year. The University of Maine at Orono and the Maine State Library can do computer searches for a fee but only the University of Maine at Orono has fiche reproduction capability and neither loan fiche readers. U.M.O. is 80 miles away and the State Library is 45 miles away.

An Adult Learning Cooperative is presently being formed in the area. It is funded by a grant from FIPSE. The purpose of the Cooperative is to coordinate the activities of those offering educational programs for adults in the area, perhaps through the publication of a joint directory, and the establishment of a phone-in learning exchange to link those offering programs with those who want training.

DOCUMENTATION OF SITE

Two reports plus a continuation proposal are submitted to OE each year by MCTC. These reports include progress to date in meeting the objectives established in the approved proposal.

MCTC also participated in a National documentation pilot of the Teachers' Centers'program last spring and will participate in the implementation phase of the National documentation of the Teachers' Center program this year. This involves bi-monthly telephone interviews during which information about participation in training activities and use of ongoing services is collected.

MCTC also documents circulation of library and instructional materials by role group of user, requests for information by role group of user and topic of request, numbers of fiche and journal articles ordered, and phone requests.

Assessment information is kept about training programs, library materials, computer searches and the purpose and value of documents ordered.

At the present time, the number of participants involved and the amount of involvement (hours) are the major factors used as criteria for determining the success of activities.

The Policy Board and local superintendents are interested in looking at other measures, such as, the development and use of curricular and instructional materials, and changes in teacher behavior in classrooms. The Director is in the process of seeking an outside evaluator who would develop and execute a procedure for more qualitative evaluations.

The Policy Board reviews, at least annually, the assessment information in order to formulate plans for the following year. Each committee uses assessment information to determine what areas to expand, delete or modify (i.e., materials committee will give more emphasis to purchasing instructional materials than professional materials).

Since MCTC has been operational for just one year and some services were started in the spring of 1979, assessment information has only recently been collected. More information and possibly different kinds of assessment may suggest appropriate strategies for modifying services in the future.

III

PRACTICES FILE OPERATIONS

ACTUAL OPERATIONS

Practices File information is disseminated through the Information Support Service (ISS) the same way as all computerized educational information is disseminated. The ISS flow chart further explains this process. (See Appendix 7) The nationally available information resources are shown. The service starts with a practitioner request (See Appendix 8). This form is designed to ask pertinent information both for Teachers' Center documentation and for Practices File user profile information.

When the appropriate search logic is figured, the searcher determines which file or files will be accessed and the search is performed. Printoffs are packaged in ISS packets along with an ISS flow chart, instruction sheet and ISS evaluation form. (See Appendices 9 and 10) If the Practices File printoffs are included then an awareness letter and search appraisal form are also included (See Appendix 11). The packets are then distributed to our schools according to the pick-up and delivery service established for all materials flowing back and forth to the Center.

Practitioners then review their printoffs, check off those of interest, check off the evaluation forms and return the packets to the Teachers' Center return boxes in each school. Microfiche, journal reprints, and hard copies are then ordered. In the case of the Practices File, microfiche is also ordered but letters are sent out in those cases where direct contacts must be made. (See Appendix 12).

When microfiche or direct contact materials are received they are distributed to practitioners along with portable microfiche readers if needed. MCTC materials will also be made available through the ISS, except that these materials will not need to be ordered since they already exist within the local districts.

The use of the Practices File and the dissemination of its information is an integral part of the ISS. There are a few special procedures necessary because of the pilot site testing of the Practices File. First, this includes the decision to access the File which could really only be done accurately after adequate searching experience was gained in the File.

Then the appropriate user information must be gathered; however, our request forms seem to accommodate this need very well. As mentioned before, the awareness letter and search appraisal form must be added to those packets as needed but this is integrated very well. There are also special measures for adding Practices File microfiche and direct contact materials, but once these procedures were developed, all Practices File operations simply became a part of the whole ISS.

It should be mentioned that formal presentations of the ISS are being given in all of the 42 participating schools. So far, 22 schools have had formal presentations given by the ISS Coordinator, usually at staff meetings. It is at this time that each school is then brought into the ISS. The Practices File is also introduced as one of our computerized educational resources. Posters are put up in all of the teachers' rooms along with the MCTC return boxes. The poster also explains more about the content of the Practices File. The purpose of these presentations is to make the practitioners aware of the types of resources available to them. A demonstration search is also performed, spontaneously, as a result of a practitioner request. This really seems to generate excitement about the whole concept of computerized educational resources, because practitioners see first hand how it can work. As a result of those efforts, the Practices File has become an integral part of the Mid-Coast Teachers' Center's Information Support Service.

PROBLEMS AND CONSTRAINTS

With respect to the actual computer searching of the Practices File, there seems to be few problems at all. It is relatively easy for an experienced searcher to retrieve the appropriate information. Hopefully, this would continue to be true as the File grows in size. It is time consuming to have to record user profile information for each individual search; however, this is necessary because of the pilot test and that is certainly understood. After the initial pilot test, it is hoped that this extra effort would not be needed.

It is obvious that there is some extra effort required in the use of the Practices File. This involves documentation and special ordering and contact procedures. Most of this, however, is because of the testing of the File and not because of the File itself. It would also be assumed that some of these efforts would no longer be necessary when the pilot test ends. There does continue to be a problem with some of the direct contacts. Contacts are made primarily by letter but also by telephone at times. Copies of three contact responses are included and are of interest (See Appendices 13, 14 and 15). About 70% of those asked have responded with some type of material appropriate to the abstract. Some do not understand why they have been asked for information and do not seem to know about the Practices File. Others simply do not have the money to disseminate their materials or charge a fee which is not evident in the abstract itself. Part of the problem seems to stem from the File itself but it could also be attributed both to the contact people involved and the Site itself. We are trying to facilitate the dissemination of this type of material by making more telephone contacts. Hopefully, this will speed up the process.

A constraint of the Practices File at the present time would have to be the limited size and scope of the File. Because there are only 2000 documents, the use of the File has to be limited. Even with its limited size, however, the use of this File has increased dramatically in the past two months. The apparent reasons for this will be further explained in the last section of this case study. It is certainly hoped that the scope and size of the File be increased so that many more practitioners will be able to benefit from it.

Reflecting upon practitioner use of such a File, there seems to be some need for more inservice training in adapting Practices File information for classroom use. The formal presentations do certainly help to make practitioners both aware of information resources and how to use those resources, but the changes these resources are having in the classroom is very difficult to assess.

The ISS as a whole also needs to address this concern. Our new microfiche/material questionnaire is aimed at helping to answer these questions. (See Appendix16) It is too early now to tell. We are also planning to form an ISS Advisory Committee (to be comprised of practitioner users) in the near future, to help plan follow-up assessment procedures. The Practices File also needs some type of follow-up assessment and/or training. The search appraisal forms are appropriate for the initial search results but the actual use of microfiche or contact materials has not been adequately addressed. More information about practitioner use of the File will be included under Implications.

BENEFITS

The most important benefit of the Practices File to the Teachers' Center, after five months of testing it would undoubtedly be the type of information contained. As a Teachers' Center, we have been able to access a type of information which would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to access any other way. Therefore, we benefit simply by having the availability of a unique resource. Whenever a request is made for model or exemplary programs or instructional materials in the area of mathematics, science, or environmental education, a search is made of the Practices File. In some cases we simply would not have been able to meet the needs of the practitioner very well at all if the Practices File were not available. Since our ISS has nearly always included the Practices File, the ISS Coordinator really could not foresee adequate use of the information service without the Practices File.

Another obvious benefit to the Center has been the free computer time awarded to pilot site participants. This free time can, of course, be used for other data bases as well and it is certainly very much appreciated. It is also understood that this free time will end when the pilot test ends.

Benefits to practitioners, as mentioned before, are difficult to assess. However, there are some indicators. From the search appraisal forms (40% returned), 90% of the practitioners stated that the Practices File was at least equal to or superior to other available informational resources. Also, 50% revealed that they did not know where else to get similar information. The obvious benefit, therefore, has been the availability of a type of information which would be very difficult to get elsewhere. A specific case study is included to show exactly how one group of practitioners has used the Practices File. (See Appendix 17)

Another benefit is that because of the direct contacts involved, practitioners can get actual materials rather than just microfiche. Practitioners find these more easily adaptable for classroom use. As stated previously, more needs to be done to completely assess practitioner benefit, in light of both the Teachers' Center and the Practices File.

IMPLICATIONS

Because the Practices File does offer valuable practitioner information, it is another vehicle for sustaining support, both for the ISS and for the Teacher Center concept as a whole. The concept of Teacher Centers is relatively new and untested as is the concept of a computerized educational information service in rural Maine. Most anything that can aid in building long lasting relationships between our teachers and the Teachers' Center itself has to be beneficial. In our case, we hope to interest practitioners in the more visible services of the Center such as the ISS and then hopefully go from there to build a stronger commitment.

The ISS, including the use of the Practices File, does act as an ongoing needs assessment. When a practitioner files a search request, it is an assessment of those concerns which are foremost at the time. As an example of this, we have documented certain types of information concerning the practitioner requests for our first year report. As of September 18th, 380 searches had been performed for 230 practitioners. 70 of these practitioners were concerned with special education problems (learning disabled, mentally retarded, etc.). That is 30% of the total number of requests, all dealing with various aspects of special education. This certainly speaks of a major concern in education, especially when you consider that only 26 of those 70 requests were made by special education instructors. Knowing these problem areas can only help the Teachers' Center to improve its services in order to meet those needs.

The Practices File has recently been accessed more and more. As the number of search requests has increased so has the use of the File. The File has now been accessed for approximately 30% of those requests received. That is very high when you consider the limited scope and size of the Practices File. As mentioned before, the ISS would certainly suffer if the Practices File were not available.

As far as future implications are concerned, the Practices File, if enlarged and broadened, has the potential to become one of the most valuable National educational resources available. This is because it is much more up to date and includes more appropriate types of materials for practitioners than do most of the other national educational resources now available. It also seems quite important that appropriate practitioner activities be made sharable on a national level via the Practices File. This type of sharing could be a way of saving and disseminating Teachers' Center activities. In the future, it may be that the Practices File, along with MCTC, will be the most widely used computerized resource at the Mid-Coast Teachers' Center.

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CASE STUDY

National Education Practices File
Pilot Test

NORTHWEST REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY

Prepared by: Mr. Marv Harmon

INTRODUCTION

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Dissemination Program has been involved with the National Education Practices File development effort since 1977, when Gregory Benson of Bibliographic Retrieval Services, Inc. began contacting educational agencies to assess interest in--and gather input for--this effort. The Dissemination Program has now served as a site for testing the file since its pilot period began in May of this year, and staff who have been directly involved in pilot test activities have agreed to participate in the current case study of pilot site operations and related concerns. The following report represents an attempt both to document this site's carrying out of file operations and to demonstrate how the existence and the activities of the site have affected relationships with clients and the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory organization, and vice versa.

THE ORGANIZATION

The Dissemination Program is headquartered within one of the administrative units, The Educational Services Division, of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). NWREL, therefore, provides the organizational context in which the Dissemination Program's testing of the Education Practices File has taken place.

Mission

The mission of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory[1] is to assist education, government, community agencies, business and labor in improving quality and equality in educational programs and processes. This mission is consistent with and supportive of the two primary goals adopted by the National Institute of Education: improvement of practice and educational equity.

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[1] This description of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory is taken from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Five-Year Plan, Technical Proposal, NWREL, July 2, 1979, p. 3 and following.

The Laboratory achieves its purpose through research, development, dissemination and service activities, which are specified in the mission statement:

- Developing and disseminating effective educational products and procedures
- Conducting research on educational problems
- Providing technical assistance in educational problem solving
- Evaluating effectiveness of educational programs and projects
- Providing training in educational planning, management, evaluation and instruction
- Serving as an information resource on effective educational programs and processes

NWREL Region

Six states and two territories comprise the Laboratory's region. The Laboratory was established in June 1966 by institutions in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. Subsequently, the Boards of Education of American Samoa, Guam and Hawaii adopted resolutions to affiliate with the Laboratory.[2]

Member Institutions

The Laboratory Bylaws make provision for organizations and agencies in the region to become NWREL member institutions through the adoption of a resolution seeking membership by the institution's governing board and acceptance by the Laboratory's Board of Directors. Currently, 807 institutions in the region are members of NWREL.

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[2] NWREL has disseminated information about the National Education Practices File to the six states in the region. Requests for searches are accepted from five of these, with Alaska requesters being referred to that state's pilot site.

NWREL member institutions play key roles in Laboratory policy making, planning and implementation of R&D programs through:

- Electing members of the Board of Directors
- Identifying critical problem areas
- Assisting with program planning, including identification of needed programs and materials
- Designing and developing materials which are best suited for their use
- Evaluating the effectiveness of programs and materials by participating in field testing activities
- Helping disseminate and install proven programs and materials in institutions where they are needed

Governance

The Laboratory is governed by a Board of Directors representing the educational stakeholders in the region. The Bylaws were amended in March 1979 to strengthen representation of the diverse constituencies which exist.

Needs Sensing

The Laboratory's work is regionally focused to provide R&D support to policy and implementation decision makers. This context is important in viewing needs assessment from the institutional perspective. Because of the support nature of the Laboratory, the perspectives on needs assessment and analysis are in some ways different from those of operating agencies such as state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs). That is, the Laboratory does not collect and analyze needs data for the purposes of making direct policy and implementation decisions about school improvement--those decisions are prerogatives of LEAs, SEAs, and in some cases, federal agencies such as U.S. Office of Education and the Office of Civil Rights.

The Laboratory collects and analyzes educational needs data to provide information which assists the institution in developing agendas for research, development, dissemination and services supportive of policy and implementation decisions about school improvement made by practitioners in the region. Therefore, the key feature of the process is one of regional needs analysis and synthesis for use by the Board of Directors in establishing annual program priorities and long-range institutional plans.

In addition to collecting needs data directly from school administrators and teachers, the Laboratory relies on information from many secondary sources in balancing and considering the range of needs felt by diverse groups.

Staffing

At the present time the work of the Laboratory is carried out by a full-time professional staff of approximately 180 people, with over 200 additional persons in part-time, technical and support positions. The activities of the full-time professional staff with regard to 1) procuring, developing and transforming information resources, and 2) linking clients to information resources might best be communicated by looking at these activities in the context of the units in the Laboratory's organizational structure where these activities take place. A chart depicting NWREL staff involvement in these activities is provided on the following pages. Special contract work often provides these and other Laboratory staff (e.g., Business Office, Media Center) in development of information resources and/or information linkage activities with clients.

SITE OPERATIONS

Given its clients, service region and activities, the NWREL Dissemination Program was a logical--even predictable--applicant for participation in the National Educational Practices File pilot test. The component of the program

NWREL UNITS AND STAFF INVOLVED IN INFORMATION RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND LINKAGE

Unit	No. Full-time Professionals	Procuring, Developing and Transforming Info. Resources	Linking Clients to Info. Resources
Library/Information Center	2		Provides reference materials to Lab staff and external clients Conducts info. searches for Lab staff and external clients
Marketing Office	2	Develops/distributes info. about Lab products and services	Helps clients match needs with available Lab services & products
Instructional Improvement Division Programs: Education and Work, Competency Based Education, Indian Reading and Language Development	28	Creates comprehensive strategies, procedures and materials which can assist in the application of new and more effective teaching and learning activities related to a problem area Collects materials which assist users in adapting alternative procedures and instructional techniques which can assist in problem solution	Links the expertise of the developer to the appropriate brokerage unit and assists brokers to select, store and retrieve alternative solutions to a given problem area
Evaluation, Research and Assessment Division Programs: Assessment and Measurement, Audit and Evaluation, Title I Technical Assistance Centers, Research on Evaluation, Project PLANIT, Computer Technology	47	PLANIT develops and implements low-cost, portable language systems for computer assisted instruction; others are chiefly research and/or service programs	Helps clients to develop and apply methods and techniques to conduct educational assessment and evaluation, computerized management systems and other computer functions

NWREL UNITS AND STAFF INVOLVED IN INFORMATION RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND LINKAGE (Continued)

Unit	No. Full-time Professionals	Procuring, Developing and Transforming Info. Resources	Linking Clients to Info. Resources
Multicultural Education Division Programs: Multicultural Inservice Training Project, Center for Bilingual Education, Women's Equity	13	Develops materials and curricula focusing on the needs of specific audiences	Provides educators with training and materials which build awareness of cultural factors which affect the learning environment and to develop positive learning experiences which take these factors into account
Educational Services Division Programs: Adult Education, Alaska Telecommunications, Curriculum and Administration Services Program, Dissemination Program, Rural Education Program	26	Develops training strategies, designs for educators regionally and nationally Develops information catalogs, collections Develops Spanish language consumer education materials from English versions (Adult Education Program) Develops instructional and management systems using modern technological methods Develops materials and procedures for school board training Conducts information transformation and syntheses for use by specific audiences	Assists practitioners in applying sound planning and problem solving practices and in identifying and utilizing relevant research and development outcomes Provides consultation, training and technical assistance to educators regionally and nationally for planning, designing training, conducting evaluation, conducting staff development, increasing effectiveness of management and communications, etc. Conducts info. searches and referrals

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which serves the Northwest states and Hawaii--the Northwest Regional Exchange[3]--has as part of its scope of work for this time period:

> To collaborate with state personnel toward the development and implementation of a system for the accession and exchange of information about resources developed in the region and to assist SEAs in meeting their client needs
>
> and
>
> To cooperate with existing libraries, information centers and information networks to identify and make more available information about systematically developed research and demonstration products and processes[4]

Within the context of these activities, the relevance of serving as a pilot site for testing the Practices File is obvious and the expected benefits are numerous. Additional comments about the Program's motives for--and outcomes expected from--participating in the pilot test will be offered in this report.

Before proceeding further with a discussion of the context in which our work with the Practices File is taking place, it may be well to clarify what, within the NWREL organization, is meant by the "site." Although the Northwest Regional Exchange component of the Dissemination Program is the unit into whose scope of work the Practices File effort is subsumed, the program has utilized the expertise of the NWREL Information Center/Library to carry out actual file operations.[5]

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[3] The Northwest Regional Exchange is composed of the states of Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. Regional Exchange staff are housed in the NWREL Dissemination Program and work with designated contact people from these states to facilitate the development of a regional dissemination configuration; to coordinate a system for the identification, management and exchange of resources in the region; and to assemble, analyze and report data on regional use of R&D outcomes.

[4] NWREL, Dissemination Program Technical Proposal, June 1, 1978 - November 30, 1979 (Revised), November 1978, pp. 1 and 2.

[5] There are two reasons for this arrangement: One is that NWREL's only trained computer searcher is a member of the Information Center staff. Secondly, for the funding period during which the pilot test is taking place and in anticipation of serving as a test site, the Dissemination Program built considerable Information Center staff time (otherwise supported by indirect costs) into the program budget. See Practices File Operations section of this report.

The organizational relationship between these units is shown on the chart on the following page. Some Practices File activities have been carried out by Dissemination Program staff, some by the Information Center staff and some, such as developing the promotional brochure and this report, have been conducted collaboratively by members of both staffs. An understanding of the sharing of site activities by these units will help to clarify what is meant by "benefits accruing to the site" when this topic is taken up later in this report. The following discussion of site functions, clients and so on is chiefly concerned with the work of the NWREL Dissemination Program.

The Dissemination Program has both national and regional functions. The national component, the Dissemination Support Service, is responsible for providing consultation, training, technical assistance and other services to the staffs of NIE-specified regional programs--services which are intended to build the capacity of these regional program staffs to serve their SEA clients and others designated by them.

The regional component is the Northwest Regional Exchange mentioned earlier in this report. Some of the functions of this component have been described briefly, including the work aimed at increasing practitioner awareness of and access to R&D outcomes[6] and promising practices. This component has as its ultimate clients all persons in its service region who are involved with the educational system, with SEA dissemination personnel serving as the major direct service recipients and first links to practitioners and students. These SEA contact people were so designated by the chief state school officer of each of the six states. Dissemination services provided by the NWRx are primarily focused on clients responsible for educational leadership, management and policymaking.

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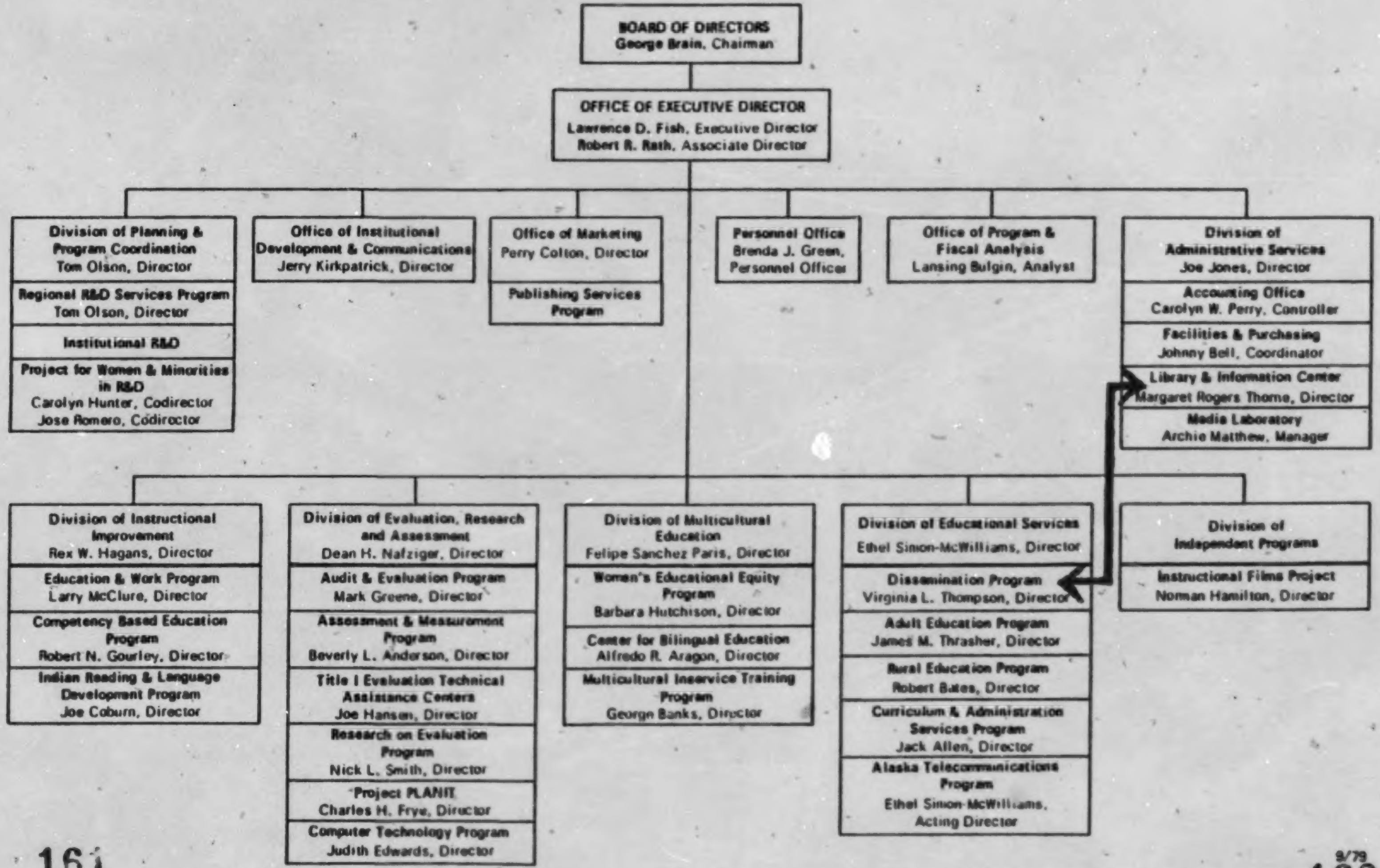
[6] The term "outcomes" is used because the results of these efforts include strategies, processes, human resources and data bases, as well as programs and products.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Organizational Chart



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9/79

Other groups receiving materials and services from the NWRx directly include local sites selected for special pilot projects and any local or intermediate site designated by the SEA. Examples of materials provided include the NIE- and NWRx-developed publications and, on loan, any of the 200 materials sets comprising the NWRx Educational Materials Collection. Examples of services include state dissemination planning assistance to SEA personnel, linkage training workshops for ISA and LEA staffs and assistance in resource file development to any of these groups. The NWRx also participates in the national Research and Development Exchange as both a provider and a recipient of resources and assistance in the area of dissemination.

The appropriateness of the formats and content of Dissemination Program services to client needs has been determined through initial needs assessments, ongoing needs assessments, review of current dissemination research findings, action research and the priorities set by NIE based on its activities in these areas. In response to the needs which emerge from these services, the Dissemination Program has structured a scope of work which is concerned with all four levels of the DAG definition of dissemination, although perhaps as much as two-thirds of the program's energies are currently devoted to spread and exchange activities, with a third or less devoted to choice and implementation functions. Examples of activities in these areas are as follows:

- Spread - Mailing, information presentations, program materials and developmental work leading to these
- Exchange - Seminars, workshops, needs sensing, consultations and developmental work leading to these
- Choice - Direct technical assistance leading to policy and/or plan development and work preparatory to providing such assistance

- Implementation - Special contracts requiring monitoring of activities/behaviors associated with new plans or policies and work preparatory to providing such assistance

With the exception of special program contracts and consultant services provided to the Laboratory's Curriculum and Administration Services Program (CASP), these activities are supported through a Dissemination Program contract with the National Institute of Education.

The Dissemination Program is the only unit within NWREL which is totally devoted to researching, developing and providing materials and services in the area of dissemination--either as a process or in conjunction with particular content concerns. Other NWREL programs can be described as having a dissemination component, which oftentimes includes both program level dissemination activities (e.g., a monthly newsletter) and a strategy for involving the Dissemination Program in helping them to determine and to meet their dissemination needs. NWREL dissemination activities, whether they be the activities of the Dissemination Program or of other Laboratory units, are coordinated through the Division of Planning and Program Coordination.

Dissemination Program activities are documented in a variety of ways, including field reports, advisory committee[7] reports, quarterly program reports and other program deliverables. Program evaluation is conducted in a variety of ways as well, including formal and informal advisory committee evaluations, participant evaluations of group activities, and internal evaluation as carried out informally by all program staff and formally as conducted by program staff charged with the evaluation component of the scope of work.[8]

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[7] Both the national and regional components of the program make use of advisory committees for suggestions, plan development, information linkage, evaluation and so forth.

[8] Program activities are, of course, also reviewed by and modified with input from division leadership, NWREL policy and management groups, executive management and the NWREL Board of Directors, as well as by NIE reviewers.

Copies of forms which have been used for documentation and evaluation are on file.

Evaluations of specific activities (e.g., a workshop) and indications from overall program evaluation efforts influence planning for future service delivery in several ways, including:

- Discussion of recent evaluation findings in conceptual discussions involving program staff and planning conducted in light of these
- Provision of drafts of agendas, designs and plans to advisory committee members for feedback leading to modification and improvements
- Review with SEA staff evaluations of activities conducted in cooperation with them so that cooperative planning for future service delivery can take place
- Use of evaluation information indicating that changes in planned activities are warranted to make recommendations to this effect to program monitors

PRACTICES FILE OPERATIONS

Operations

As mentioned briefly earlier in this document, the structure for the Practices File pilot test involves two of NWREL's work units in a collaborative endeavor. The Practices File site is the Dissemination Program, although the actual searching is performed by the Information Specialist in the Information Center/Library, located in another part of the building. The Information Center is the organizational library serving the entire Laboratory and outside clients as needed. The rationale for this form of organization for the file test is that the Information Specialist is the only trained computer searcher in the Laboratory, and it did not seem advisable to train someone new just for the test period. On the contrary, it seemed obvious that the expertise of the Information Specialist would enable her to quickly master the new file and to provide meaningful input concerning the file's structure and utility--input that a new searcher, lacking the perspective that comes from long experience with other files and systems, would not be able to provide. The searcher has therefore had to work very closely with the Dissemination Program staff in monitoring use of the file, preparing and disseminating promotional materials, keeping records and writing reports.

Operation of the Practices File commenced on May 15, 1979. During the first four months of operation, file use was limited almost entirely to inhouse use. Reasons for this were:

- The availability of the file could be readily announced through the Laboratory house organ, the Insider.
- Schools were not in session.

The decision was made in the very beginning to produce a professional quality brochure and to distribute it through as many channels as possible, soon after the commencement of the school year.

There was some non-Laboratory use of the file in the early months. That use came about as a result of word-of-mouth advertising by the searcher and the Dissemination Program staff, plus small-scale distribution of a fact sheet on the file (Attachment A). Fact sheets were distributed to the Northwest Regional Exchange Advisory Board, to 40 online searchers at a workshop sponsored by the Pacific Northwest Chapter of the American Society for Information Science, and to two Portland State University graduate library media classes (comprised mostly of working school librarians in Oregon).

In September, 6,000 copies of the formal brochure were printed (Attachment B). The distribution over the six-state region has been as follows:

900	Oregon Educational Media Association Fall Conference (October 11-12)
100	Alaska State Library for their distribution
400	Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction for distribution to SEA staff; October conferences of Washington State School Administrators and Washington Library Media Association

1100	Idaho State Department of Education for SEA staff; mailings throughout the state; Idaho Media Association conference
1000	Hawaii State Department of Education Dissemination Program for distribution throughout the state
125	Oregon State Department of Education for SEA staff; Oregon Dissemination conference
400	Montana SPI for distribution to school districts and SEA staff
50	Association of Regional Media Centers of Oregon for distribution to membership

In addition, the brochures have been distributed as opportunity arises by Dissemination Program staff and Information Center staff.

Requesters of services have been encouraged to contact the searcher directly. Experience with computerized information retrieval in the past has indicated how vital it is for a searcher to negotiate the search request directly with the requester. The requester is not required to fill out any forms. In the first months of Practices File operation, the searcher would call anyone from whom she received a written request in order to clarify the request and gather the user/use information. However, in the last weeks of the test period, that policy has had to be abandoned because of the sheer volume of requests. If a written request contains enough detail for the searcher to structure an adequate search, that search is performed without direct contact with the requester.

The process for a search can be detailed as follows:

1. Requester writes or phones searcher.
2. If written request contains adequate detail, searcher goes immediately to step 3. If requester phones or if written request requires a followup phone call, the searcher negotiates the search directly with the requester and records user/use information.
3. Searcher records user/use information on a worksheet (Attachment C).
4. Searcher structures and runs search.
5. Completed search is mailed to requester with:
    Cover letter (Attachment D-1)
    Search Appraisal Form (Attachment D-2)
    Explanation of BRS codes (Attachment D-3)
    Stamped, addressed return envelope

The cover letter is a form letter with room at the bottom for an additional paragraph if any explanation of the search strategy or results is needed. (In the case of a search that retrieves no information, the searcher writes a letter to the requester explaining why nothing was retrieved and encouraging the requester to try again on another topic.)

6. Search Appraisal Forms are returned. (We follow up if they are not.)

The operation of the Practices File has been integrated into the activities of the Information Center. When an inhouse or outside request for information is received that is appropriate for searching in the file, a search is suggested. The Practices File has become another tool in the total scope of the Information Center and is used whenever appropriate.

The operational problems with the Practices File have revolved mostly around the issue of time (or the lack thereof). The file itself poses no more searching difficulties than does ERIC; in fact, the Practices File is simpler to search at present because of its small size, which allows the searcher to use broad, encompassing search strategies without fear of an excessive number of hits. However, the recordkeeping involved in the test period is onerous. The searcher spends more online time entering initial information on the request/requester than on actual searching. Gathering that information from the requester at least doubles the time necessary for most search negotiations. In addition, mailing out Search Appraisal Forms and conducting the followup to assure their return requires significant amounts of clerical time. Considering that this site has only one searcher and that this individual is also the reference librarian, it is apparent that such recordkeeping would have to be confined to a short test period.

In addition to the recordkeeping required for each search, it requires considerable time to keep data on professional and support staff time spent in various activities in six categories for purposes of a monthly report. We have addressed this problem by developing a form for logging this information (Attachment E). The form has helped us keep data more consistently and accurately, but the process continues to be time consuming.

There are some problems within the Practices File itself, notably inconsistent indexing. Although the search terms are ERIC compatible, the indexing sometimes is not. For example, ERIC uses mandatory leveling descriptors, one of which must be applied to any document/article if an educational level is at all appropriate. It is evident that such is not the case with the Practices File, for the searcher has done searches in which she is looking for programs at the elementary level, only to find that if she limits the output to elementary/primary/intermediate, she will lose several descriptions of programs that are indeed for those levels and may even have a word such as "elementary" in the program title. This uncertainty in indexing is certainly correctable at this early stage in the file's development, but it must definitely be looked to if the file is to be enlarged and effectively searchable. The way this problem has been addressed by the searcher is to search more broadly than she normally would. This is especially important in a file this small, if one is not to lose significant program descriptions from an already small final Boolean set.

Finally, there has been some confusion concerning the kinds of materials contained in the Practices File. It was our original understanding that the file would exclude those items which the ERIC system is set up to accommodate, and would instead confine its inclusions to descriptions of programs and practices. The Practices File does, however, include some items in the former category at this time (e.g., curriculum guides). This problem, too, should be relatively easy to resolve during this early stage of the file's development.

Benefits

Benefits which accrue to the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory and to work units within it from having the Practices File available include:

- The Laboratory's involvement with new audiences. Individuals and groups who have never used the Laboratory's services--or even been aware of the Laboratory--have heard of the Laboratory and are requesting searches.
- "Grassroots" involvement. A surprising number of search requests have come from small, rural schools. The interchange involved in conducting searches acquaints the Laboratory with the existence of these schools and their needs, and the schools learn of the Laboratory and its work.
- Feedforward data. The Laboratory has an opportunity to share with NIE and others information on user needs, and this information can be used to formulate new R&D thrusts.
- Development of resource collections. Work units within the Laboratory who are responsible for providing materials which respond to needs in the field gain needs information leading to the development of more useful collections.
- Expansion of searching expertise and influence on data base development. The Laboratory's expertise in searching is enhanced by the searcher having the opportunity to gain training and practice in utilizing a new type of data base. Additionally, the Laboratory has an opportunity to influence data base development as comparisons between the new file and ERIC are made and claims of compatibility tested, and as searcher input is solicited and utilized by Practices File developers.
- Inhouse collaboration. The manner in which the Laboratory has chosen to operate its site has provided an opportunity for the Laboratory's Information Center and its Dissemination Program to collaborate on a complex and relatively long-term project.

The benefits described as accruing to the Laboratory vis a vis its service region also apply to the Dissemination Program with regard to its clients, particularly insofar as relationships with new audiences are initiated and those with SEA clients are strengthened.

Benefits which accrue to clients range from immediate helps to longer-range advantages, including:

- Free searches and an introduction to a new research method. Because searches are free during the test period, people who would not otherwise use computerized information retrieval to assist in meeting their needs are encouraged to do so, thereby expanding their horizons about the availability of information and means of accessing it.

- Networking. Clients may well be drawn into a network of people throughout the country who are engaged in like projects. This is of benefit to everyone, as it helps to create informal networks across all sorts of boundaries, both real and imagined.

- Curriculum development. As curriculum development in relatively new areas (e.g., environmental education) becomes a priority, clients are provided a means of accessing information about the work of others in these areas.

- Influence on data base development. Clients have the opportunity to furnish information on the usefulness of the Practices File, thereby influencing its future direction.

- SEA relationships with clients. Dissemination Program clients in the SEAs are benefitted by being able to provide to their ISA and LEA clients information about and access to a new resource base.

Implications

Many of the implications of the Practices File have already been cited. It can be expected, for example, that the Laboratory's involvement with some of the individuals and groups who have used the Practices File will be ongoing. Additionally, the areas of interest expressed by those requesting Practice File searches provide the Laboratory with another means of keeping current with practitioner needs. For example, a large number of search requests received thus far have been concerned with gifted student education.

Using the Practices File as an inhouse learning tool, the Information Center, the Dissemination Program and other units within the Laboratory have clearer indications of the kinds of information resources whicn they need to make available. And if these units are made aware, through experiences in operating the file, that practitioner interest in a content area generally means interest in examining new classroom practices in that area for their adoption or adaption potential, the kinds of resource selections these staff make to respond to future requests will be influenced.

The effect of Practices File availability on sustaining and maintaining service relationships is difficult to determine at this time. However, since client requests for information resources frequently lead to--and even more frequently follow from--service arrangements such as planning assistance or training, the Practices File can be viewed as an important support piece for initiating and maintaining service relationships.

BRS *Bibliographic Retrieval Services, Inc.*

Corporation Park, Bldg. 702
Scotia, New York 12302
(518) 374-5011

CASE STUDY

National Education Practices File
Pilot Test

KANSAS CITY METROPOLITAN INFORMATION NETWORK

Prepared by: Mr. Philip Tompkins
Ms. Leslie Loftus

THE ORGANIZATION

The Kansas City Metropolitan Information Network is a cooperative online searching group staffed by librarians from the public library systems in the two-state metropolitan area -- Johnson County, Kansas City, Kansas Kansas City, Missouri and Mid-Continent -- and by librarians in the following academic and health science libraries -- the University of Missouri-Kansas City General and Medical, St. Luke's Hospital Medical and the University of Kansas Medical Center. The network is a voluntary referral network with an exclusively local configuration. The eight search site libraries were carefully selected to ensure that data bases available through Lockheed, System Development Corporation, Bibliographic Retrieval Services, the Information Bank, the National Library of Medicine and other vendors or data file producers would be available in at least one of the libraries in the network. Each participating library agreed to provide searching for any citizen in the community who might contact it.

Each of the search site libraries furnished equipment and staff to make the network operable. The in-service training of the librarians has been funded from grants from the Missouri State Library and from the individual libraries. The on-going training program is a two-track one providing intensive training in systems and data files related to individual systems for online searching as well as invitational training sessions for library staff who, though not searchers, need to develop significant amounts of information about the referral process for patrons seeking information.

No single library searches all the data bases available through the above-mentioned systems. All, however, do search educational data bases such as ERIC and *Psychological Abstracts*, etc.. Sharing the responsibility for searching on a metropolitan basis was the convincing rationale for seeking a cooperative network in which the several libraries would choose those data files for which they felt there was reason to assume responsibility. Sharing the responsibility for searching implies a recognition by the eight libraries that training costs, while considerable in any event, could be more economically shared through a cooperative arrangement. An aggressive referral system among searching non-searching libraries has made the network a cost-effective and economically viable operation. The network hopes to continue these policies in the coming years by incorporating carefully designed statistical data in periodic reports and analyses of its operational facets. Two major articles have been published in nationally circulated professional publications; a major evaluation based on information manipulated through SPSS software was presented at the 1978 ALA annual convention at the meeting of State Library Agencies. Computer searching is done on a cost-recovery basis. The citizen requesting a search must agree to pay all online and offline charges. These charges are standard in the network.

MINET is governed by the chief administrators of the eight search site libraries. An organization of MINET searchers maintains a close liaison with the administrators group through a project director. At the present time there are 29 searchers serving the network. There are other libraries in the metropolitan area that do not serve the citizenry at large but do online searching. These may affiliate, for the asking, with MINET for joint training workshops, vendor contracts, and other related activities of mutual interest. At the same time the MINET searchers have been a major factor in the organization and success of area Online Users Group, a voluntary, continuing education association for updating searchers information, techniques and sharing experiences.

THE SITES

The Kansas City NEPF site, then, is unlike any of the other sites in the complexity of its organization and the potential it has for simultaneously testing an educational test file in multitype libraries in an urban setting. All of the sites are both dissemination and linking agents among themselves and between themselves and target client groups.

The four public library systems bear a special responsibility to the public school systems within their districts. Two of the public library systems are governed by public school boards. In all four cases, the public libraries have assumed responsibilities for contacting the public school districts, administrators and teachers, for participation in the testing of the file. The health science libraries serve curricular needs which ultimately would be satisfied by a fully developed NEPF. The General Library and Instructional Materials Center in the UMKC School of Education provides clients among graduate students as they prepare to teach on the elementary and secondary level as well as those who are preparing for administrative positions in schools. In addition, University faculty, already familiar with other educational data files, have provided access to the NEPF demonstration program through their classes. Throughout the network a fully developed NEPF would be made available to all three client systems mentioned in the case study protocol. During the test period, the searchers have contacted all three client systems as part of their dissemination efforts.

Each of the eight search sites have their own policies and objectives for dissemination services. In planning for the NEPF, all MINET searchers developed strategies together, each searcher building on the idiosyncratic objectives of his/her search site. The following information dissemination mechanisms were used: newsletters, inhouse publicity sheets, teachertraining activities, public information placed in the media, and direct communication with the 25 school districts in the area at the regular meetings of their superintendents. Most recently the Kansas City Metropolitan Library Network, one of the seven Resource Networks comprising the Missouri State Library Network, has been organized. Its newsletter will be the most important single publication in broadcasting the file to eight Missouri and Kansas counties which make up KCMLN. (It is anticipated that MINET will become one of the computer-related programs of KCMLN.) Budgetary support would continue to come from the individual libraries as well as from the network programming budget. Since the eight search site libraries are a part of the Resource Network mentioned above, an even broader coordination of online searching projects may be anticipated. In addition to individually developed brochures and broadsides emanating from search site libraries, MINET has continued to produce its own brochure and has engaged an advertising firm to place articles in area newspapers and magazines. These would be used in the future should there be additional testing of NEPF.

Monthly logs of searching activities are maintained and collected. These are collected and prepared for key-punching and for manipulation using the SPSS software package. This is the major analytical tool for the network, its staff, and its data file utilization. An evaluation format has been developed for use by the MINET searchers which provides data for remedial measures as well as program planning for each year. In addition, evaluation sheets are presented to clients after searching. The form used is rather standard, as such forms go, across the country; getting meaningful responses remains a difficulty.

In filing this case protocol, we are writing as much about the future possibilities which MINET might offer for a successful utilization of an NEPF. We do not mean to imply that we have employed the rather elaborate evaluation procedures which would encompass the data file if it were one of the permanent files made available by NIE. We have merely supposed that the information requested about the organization and the sites made the inclusion of such information inevitable. There appeared to us to be some overlap in the information requested in the case study protocol, hence some minor repetition.

PRACTICES FILE OPERATIONS

The Practices File is searched upon client request or in conjunction with a requested search of another data base such as ERIC. A search of the Practices File may also be recommended to a client so as to satisfy his/her information needs. If the client expresses an interest in watching the search, then an appointment is made. However, if the client cannot be present for the search, then the results of the search are mailed to the client. Included with the results are a cover letter, a listing of the citation elements and their meanings, the Search Appraisal Form and a prepaid envelope. Before the search can be performed, the client is asked to complete the User Profile Information List and describe his/her search topic. If the Practices File search is conducted in conjunction with a search of another data base, the regular in-house user information form provides the description of the topic.

Clients have been made aware of the Practices File in a number of ways. Awareness materials were developed and made available to library users. At the UMKC General Library, awareness materials are displayed on the index table where Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE) and Education Index are located. The posters provided by BRS are also displayed on bulletin boards with the names and telephone numbers of those staff members responsible for searching the Practices File. Numerous presentations have been made to university classes at UMKC General Library, the Instructional Materials Center located in the UMKC School of Education, and the University of Kansas Medical Center Clendening Library. Presentations have also been made to the Kansas City Online User's

Group and to a monthly inservice meeting of rural Johnson County (Kansas) school librarians. An article describing the Practices File was published in School and Community. a periodical publication of the Missouri State Teachers Association. Finally, direct communication with faculty students, school administrators and teachers has helped to promote awareness of the Practices File.

The Practices File operations have been incorporated into a number of site dissemination services. First and foremost, the operations of the file are an integral part of MINET's online bibliographic search services. MINET was created to provide such services to the community. If a client requests a search in another data base and the topic is such that a search of the Practices File would be appropriate, then a search is made in both files. Reference is another dissemination service that promotes use of the Practices File. If a patron has an information need that can possibly be satisfied by a search of the Practices File, then a search is strongly recommended. The library instructional program is a dissemination service provided by those MINET libraries affiliated with a teaching institution such as the University of Kansas Medical Center Clendening Library, the UMKC General Library and the Instructional Materials Center of the UMKC School of Education. The program usually involves an introduction to reference materials of a given discipline and guidance in the use of appropriate bibliographic tools. A discussion of online searching has recently become a standard feature of many of these presentations. The Practices File is discussed in those classes most likely to be interested in the File's contents.

Concerning operational problems and constraints that are unique to our site, the MINET health sciences libraries do not have much demand for the types of materials found in the Practices File. The University of Kansas Medical Center Clendening Library is the only health sciences library that has used the File to any great extent. Because of the Medical Center's graduate program in Special Education, there have been opportunities to search the File. A problem experienced by the MINET academic libraries is the customary decrease in library usage during the summer months and intersession. Because part of the pilot test occurred during these months, it was more difficult to identify potential users and to publicize the File. Finally, because MINET is made up of seven independent libraries, a great deal of time was spent in distributing information and gathering data on the Practices File.

Problems inherent in the File's operations are the following:

1) MINET searchers felt that more information on the nature of the File's contents would have been helpful to them in explaining the

File to potential users; e.g., criteria for acceptance of programs into the NDN.

2) Awareness materials were not developed soon enough. MINET searchers were under the impression that each site would be provided with awareness materials; however, after a few weeks had elapsed, MINET decided to design its own awareness handouts.
3) Clinets have found it difficult to answer some of the questions in the User Profile Information List. Specifically, if a user had more than one purpose for seeking the requested information (#9), she/he could prioritize up to three responses. However, if a user also had more than one immediate user group (#10) and/or more than one intended scope of application (#11), only one response was allowed.
4) Clients have tended to judge the File on the basis of its limited content. When searches are conducted on the Practices File with little or no results due to content limitations, client gives the File a poor evalution on this basis rather than on its potential usefulness.

5) Clients have found it difficult to evaluate the File on the basis of the printout alone. It would have been more informative if clients could have judged the File after having corresponded with the program contact person or having received the program materials.
6) Clients do not like having to write for program materials because of additional time and expense. Ideally, program materials should be handled in the same way as ERIC documents -- microfilmed and deposited in libraries and education centers throughout the country.
7) The pilot test should have been conducted during the school year and for a longer period of time.

The only problem that MINET was able to address successfully was the development of awareness materials.

MINET has benefited in a number of ways from the availability of the Practices File. First, availability of the Practices File has necessitated the training of additional staff members in online bibliographic searching. Because the

Practices File is similar to the ERIC data base, searchers have gained familiarity with ERIC. Searching skills in general have improved due to additional online practice. A second benefit is the ability to provide access to a new information resource. Information from the File can be used to answer reference queries that were not easily answered before. Availability of the Practices File has attracted community attention to MINET and its member libraries. Through publicity on the File, citizens gain awareness of MINET and its other services. Being able to access the Practices File has resulted in an improvement of professional stature for librarians/searchers. Librarians are seen as engaging in a highly specialized activity thus enhancing their image as skilled professionals. MINET libraries benefit by the attraction of new users because of the availability of the Practices File. Educational practitioners who might not normally use library services are drawn to the library so as to access the Practices File. Finally, exchange of information on the File has resulted in an overall increase in interaction among MINET searchers.

Clients have also benefited from the availability of the File. Hopefully, information acquired from the File will ultimately lead to the creation of new practices and the improvement of existing practices. Clients also learn of people who are working in similar areas of interest.

Thirdly, clients are exposed to a type of educational information that they may not have known existed. In addition, clients are exposed to online bibliographic searching and to other library resources and services.

Availability of the Practices File has had an impact on such site functions as:

1) providing access to information that is not otherwise readily available
2) strengthening relationships between schools and libraries in the metropolitan Kansas City area
3) reaching a clientele not formerly served by MINET or its member libraries
4) stimulating thought on the possibility of creating a data base containing information on local and/or state practices.

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CASE STUDY

National Education Practices File
Pilot Test

WAYNE COUNTY INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Prepared by: Mr. George H. Grimes

WAYNE COUNTY INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE CENTER-INFORMATION SERVICES

A Case Study

Provided herein is a case study of the operation of the National Education Practices File within the Professional Resource Center-Information Services department of the Wayne County Intermediate School District. The mission of the Wayne County Intermediate School District will be indicated as well as the overall purposes of Regional Service Agencies (RSA's) across the country. The objectives and purposes of the Professional Resource Center-Information Services within the Intermediate School District shall also be discussed and the operation of the National Education Practices File within that context delineated.

The Organizational Context

Regional service agencies are an emerging phenomenon on the educational scene. Born of the needs of rural education to provide coordination and administration of services in sparsely settled areas, RSAs are now providing more costly and/or specialized services in urban as well as suburban and rural settings on an area-wide basis. Examples of the development of RSAs as intermediate-level service agencies on a statewide basis can be found in Texas, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Iowa, and Michigan, among others.

The Wayne County (Michigan) Intermediate School District is a particular example of a regional service agency. Wayne County is the third largest county in the United States in terms of total population. It includes the Detroit Public Schools as well as 35 other local districts ranging in size from 1,500 to more than 20,000 students.

The Intermediate District provides three basic types of services to this varied consituency.. Administrative services include verifying student enrollment for allocation of state funds for education and administering various pass-through monies allocated to local school districts (for special education, work-study , and career education programs). Direct services are provided in such areas as data processing, special education programs operated at the request of local districts, and educational media and information services. Consultation services are available in such general areas as elementary, secondary, and special education, career education, and instructional development. Specific consultative services are also available in vocational education, instructional applications of computers, systematic studies, planning, and evaluation.

A regional service agency such as the Wayne County Intermediate School District serves as a major translator of research and development information to local school district leadership.

In line with the breadth of view of a regional agency and the role of providing rare, specialized, and/or costly services, the staff of an RSA is both more highly trained in its specialties and able to take a "long view" of their particular fields. Staff members are uniquely placed and qualified to translate theory, research, and development into the real world of elementary/secondary education and to engage in or help develop programs on a broad geographic base. RSA staff are consultants to local districts and in this role can act as major resources for those districts. Part of their job role, indeed an obligation, is to keep abreast of research and development on behalf of their constituents.

Professionals in regional service agencies are, or should be, trained and experienced in understanding theory and the implications of research. They also need to be able to explain research and development activities to those in the field in order to facilitate the translation of theory, research, and development into practice at the local level.

The Professional Resource Center-Information Services

An important service of the Wayne County Intermediate School District intended to meet the curricular needs of the local districts is the Information Services aspect of the Professional Resource Center. Information Services provides both information retrieval services in response to particular questions from practitioners as well as dissemination services for local district personnel. The ASK (Assistance for School Knowledge) Action Line performs literature searches and analysis in response to several hundred questions per year from local educators. The nature and curricular emphasis of these requests provide an ongoing barometer of areas of educational need in the county. More formal needs assessments are conducted on a regular basis to determine prime areas for the dissemination of information through services such as NEED (NEeds in EDucation), UpDatE (Updating Data in Education), and TOPICS (Tables of Periodical Indices Concerning Schools). Both retrieval and dissemination services are intended to provide information from the literature of education to help meet the needs of practitioners.

The activities and services of the Professional Resource Center-Information Services flow from the following strategic planning goals and related objectives of the Intermediate School District:

I. PROVIDE SUPPORT SERVICES TO CONSTITUENT DISTRICTS TO INCREASE THE QUALITY AND NUMBER OF APPROPRIATE EXPERIENCES FOR LEARNERS.

B. Provide increasingly effective dissemination, retrieval, and general information services.

Rationale:

The rapid tempo of educational change requires educators to have a mechanism to keep informed of new developments. This fact is recognized by the national and state education agencies, which are giving increased attention to dissemination and diffusion of local, state, and national promising educational practices.

C. Make available additional instructional materials media utilization and instructional and professional development services to local district general education and special education staff members, through increasing the services of the Professional Resource Center and its satellites.

Rationale:

Meeting the individual needs of both special education and general education students requires knowledge of, access to, and the ability to properly use appropriate materials, equipment, and other resources. The Professional Resource Center services will help local districts improve instruction and increase innovation, which are highly valued objectives among decision-makers, according to our needs studies.

In general Wayne County Intermediate School District Professional Resource Center provides service to those working with public and non-public school children and youth in Wayne County through the Professional Resource Network. The Network consists of the central and four satellite Professional Resource Centers.

The general services available from the Professional Resource Network are:

*CURRICULUM LAB: A facility for graphic and photographic production and audio reproduction on a "do-it-yourself" basis with professional and technical assistance.

INFORMATION RETRIEVAL: ASK (Assistance with School Knowledge) a direct interaction service providing current data on teaching strategies, utilizing literature searches and computer data bases.

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION: Provides packets of materials including Education Meetings and Events; UpDatE (Updating Data in Education) in-depth bibliographies and pertinent articles and documents on educational issues; and TOPICS (Tables of Periodical Indices Concerning Schools) materials from representative current educational journals.

*PRODUCTION SERVICE: High volume production and reproduction of print with the capacity for graphics, phototypesetting, plate making, multilith printing, binding and micro-filming.

PROJECT VALUE: Information about validated or promising educational programs and practices, and assistance in adapting or adopting educational innovations and alternatives.

*PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES: Workshops, conferences, presentations and "make-and-take" sessions related to instructional materials, media utilization, instructional and professional development.

Resources available include:

FILM LIBRARY: 16mm films for loan.

AUDIO AND VIDEO TAPE DUPLICATION: Audio and video tapes for duplication.

EDUCATIONAL REFERENCE LIBRARY: Includes Educational Resources Information services (ERIC) documents, sample text books, curriculum guides, local school generated material, educational periodicals, selected media materials.

*SPECIALIZED MEDIA COLLECTIONS: Media materials for Special Education, Energy Education, Metric Education, Consumer Education and Professional Development.

PROMISING EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES: Project VALUE's bank of state, national and local promising programs.

*PROFESSIONAL AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL: Available to assist (Information Specialists, Graphic Artists, Materials Utilization Specialists, Curriculum Resource Consultant).

HUMAN RESOURCE BANK: Consultants and workshop leaders available in a range of curricular and professional development areas.

Those items marked with an asterisk (*) are available at the Satellite locations.

Particular aspects of the Professional Resource Network are:

...Media Materials
-available from the central and satellite centers.

...Professional and Technical Assistance
-a Curriculum Resource Consultant and technicians are available at all centers. Additional assistance is available at the central location.

...Cooperative Materials Selection
-selection of materials is done by a committee including all satellites.

...Coordinated Acquisition of Materials
-acquisition of materials is coordinated by the central Professional Resource Center. Complete up-to-date records are kept of requests and purchases. "Trouble-shooting" and verification of orders received is done at the central location.

...Prescriptive Cataloging
-the central Technical Processing Unit provides descriptions of all materials by academic areas (and type of disability in the case of Special Education) as well as physical and other characteristics.

...Technical Processing
-the central Technical Processing Unit provides complete preparation for use as well as classification and cataloging services for purposes of retrieval on a prescriptive basis.

...Computerized Circulation and Access
-a computerized system for circulation of and access to materials is currently being implemented. When fully installed, all locations in the Network will be able to identify and circulate materials from any Network location to users.

...Telecopier Link
-the central and satellite units are interconnected by telecopiers which allow the transmission of reference, billing and other "hard copy" information among the centers.

...Courier Services
-a three-day-a-week couriervan service takes new materials to the Satellite and transfers existing materials among Satellites as needed.

...Book Catalog
-a "master" book catalog of all materials in the entire Network is planned for this year.

...Cooperative Planning
-the development and services of the Network are cooperatively planned by the satellite and central staff in coordination with the Directors of Media Services and Special Education in the Satellite host districts. Regular meetings occur for cooperative planning and each Satellite submits an annual program plan and budget to the Director, Professional Resource Center-Information Services.

As the National Education Practices File has National Diffusion Network (NDN) and other "programs that work" as a major portion of its content, exploration of the unit within the Professional Resource Center which deals with promising programs may be helpful. As this unit (Project VALUE) is one of the regional supplemental centers within the Michigan Adoption Program (the Michigan Department of Education's state level equivalent of NDN) some background on the Michigan Adoption Program will also be included.

Project VALUE

The Michigan Adoption Program is an activity of the Michigan Department of Education which disseminates exemplary educational programs that work. Funding for the Michigan Adoption Program comes from Title IVC of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and also includes monies from the United States Office of Education's National Diffusion Network.

Based on sound conceptual principles derived from dissemination/diffusion theory and practice, the Michigan Adoption Program has three unique features:

1. Grants are awarded to qualifying school districts on a first-come, first-served basis. There are no deadlines for applications or proposals.

2. Programs are available at the point of local school district readiness.

3. The adoption program is decentralized through ten regional supplemental centers. These centers are designed to create awareness about the model programs or innovations and to act as clearinghouses for awarding adoption grants.

The 1978 Annual Program Plan for Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act indicates five components within the Michigan Adoption Program:

1. Support and Funding of Demonstration Sites *

2. Development and Operation of Linking Mechanisms

3. Support and Funding of Regional Supplemental Centers

4. Participation and Cooperation in a Regional Interstate Consortium

5. Participation and Cooperation in the National Dissemination Network

*Demonstration sites are those locations where a successful program may be observed in action. Each site is funded for a minimum of one year to work with committed school districts in installing (adopting/adapting) its program. Demonstration sites are prepared to offer inservice training and technical assistance to adopters.

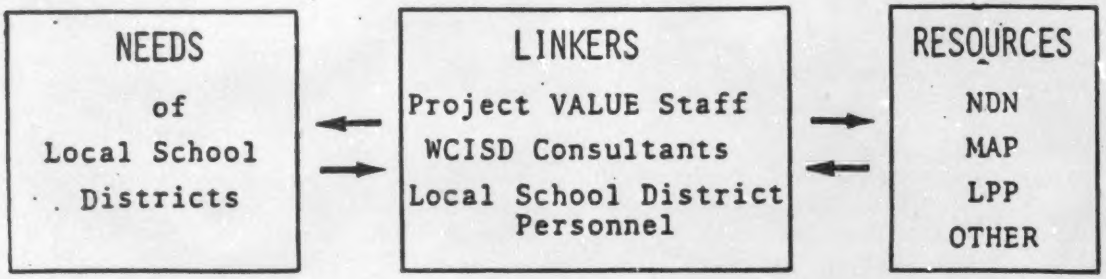
The general purpose of the Michigan Adoption Program is to link resources with needs. State-wide, this process is initiated and accomplished through a variety of means including:

1. State-wide mailings of the Michigan Educational Programs That Work Work awareness package to all local school district central staff and to all intermediate school district superintendents, as well as school building principals of both public and private non-profit schools.

2. Coordinated state-wide awareness sessions, presentations, conferences and meetings, articles in newsletters and journals, a slide/tape presentation describing the MAP, and similar means of "spread" within the educational community.

3. Regional Supplemental Centers which exist to support the systematic dissemination and adoption/adaption of demonstration programs. The supplemental centers provide services to their constituents through establishing or employing already established lines of communication with local school districts. Most regional centers utilize external and/or internal linkers.

The mission of Project VALUE is to link needs to program resources needed by Wayne County educators. This is done by having a broad bank of resources, relating resources to needs through identified linkers, and assisting schools in identifying and clarifying their needs. Project VALUE's operational model is:



It is important to note that Project VALUE's model is a two-way communication link with all the participants having equally important roles in the linkage of resources to needs.

The success of Project VALUE lies in the areas of better defining local school district needs, effective identification of relative resources, and supporting and strengthening the Project VALUE linkage network. Significant attention to assessment of the effectiveness of needs identification, resource gathering, and the linkage network is also a focus.

The various dissemination strategies employed by Project VALUE are well known and documented (awareness sessions, brochure mailings, personal contacts, presentations at meetings, and the linkage network). Current emphasis is to better tailor information about potential solutions to the needs of particular audiences, strengthen the intra-district linkage system, and improve both the accuracy and efficiency of needs assessment, as well as to broaden and make immediately responsive the bank of Project VALUE's program resources.

The Linkage System

Because of the size of the county and some of the school districts within the county, effective dissemination activities with key school populations can be a problem. Project VALUE uses an internal/external dissemination model to link resources to identified needs. The linkers include Wayne County Intermediate School District consultants, Project VALUE staff, and key personnel of the local districts in the county. Having local school district personnel act as linkers provides Project VALUE with entry into school systems and access to the internal information systems of those school districts. The school district linkers also provide valuable information concerning the educational needs of Wayne County. Strengthening school district capacity for dissemination and linking resources to needs are other factors in using Wayne County Intermediate School District consultants and internal linkers at the school district level.

Selection of Internal Linkers

Linkers internal to local school districts are key curriculum decision makers selected by the local districts. The roles which internal linkers assume are to:

1. Assist in identifying educational program needs.
2. Assist in identifying promising practices at the local district level.
3. Assist in screening of promising practices.
4. Assist in disseminating information about promising educational practices.
5. Act as a key facilitator in installing promising practices in a local school district.

The persons recommended should be:

1. Key decision makers or have credible bridges to decision makers.
2. Perceived as positive persons by all kinds of local district personnel.
3. Available for training sessions and meetings.

The process of linker selection included the polling of Wayne County Intermediate School District consultant staff to identify persons in local school districts best considered to have the above characteristics. Once the nominations were gathered, consensus developed around one or two key decision makers in most local districts. A letter was then sent by the Wayne County Intermediate School District Superintendent, Dr. William Simmons, to the superintendent of each local school district. It said in part:

> "...in our effort to assist local districts in investigating effective programs related to your needs, we would like to identify a liaison person between your school district and Project VALUE. These linkers should be key decision makers who are perceived positively by staff and are available for training sessions and meetings... . It is our hope that linkers can provide valuable educational information for your consideration that will meet some of (district's) needs..."

> "...(person) of your staff has been suggested as a linker. We look forward to this person or a staff member of your choice working with Project VALUE in what we feel is a very significant effort to provide selected and tested educational programs related to local district needs..."

Linker Training

Linker training has been provided for Project VALUE's external and internal linkers as well as state-wide to other intermediate school district personnel and State Department staff.

During the first year the topics covered were: (a) Needs Assessment, (b) Knowledge Utilization, and (c) Dissemination/Diffusion.

These workshops addressed the questions: What are the needs? What are the available solutions? Once an appropriate solution is identified, how is it successfully adopted or adapted?

At the start of the second year, the linkers internal to local school districts and the W.C.I.S.D. consultants were provided with a list of potential workshop topics and were asked to add additional items prior to prioritization. Linker training has been an ongoing aspect of Project VALUE's program.

National Education Practices File

The National Education Practices File operates as an integral part of the Professional Resource Center-Information Services' ASK/Action Line (information retrieval services). It is yet another resource to meet local information needs along with Project VALUE's bank of promising programs, on-line access to ERIC and over seventy other data bases, The Wayne County Human Resource Bank, specialized media materials collections and dissemination products. It is difficult to separate the National File from other resources as a separate aspect of the need/request/response/satisfaction/feedback process of ASK/Action Line. *The National File is brought into play when its resources are relevant to given need.

The particularly valuable aspect of the National File (at this point in time) is its National Diffusion Program program descriptions. Of great potential value would be similar information about state level (particularly Michigan in our case) and locally identified program information.

In terms of evaluating the present and future potential of the National Educational Practices File's operation staff feels that one must approach the evaluation from the point of view of the operators of the system and the potential benefactors of the system. In this content the operators of the system are also benefactors in terms of time saved (utilization of a computerized data base) and specific "hits" on desired information. As an operator of the system (NATL) the saving of staff time was of no small substance. The savings allowed the staff to perform other necessary tasks. Should this be a typical experience with other sites, then evaluation by operators of the system should play no small role in evaluating the future potential of the NATL file. From the aspect of information retrieval/management the NATL database represented as a system a major factor in cost effective searching.

*See appendix material discussing resource use

With specific reference to the operations of the PRC Information Services, in relation to NATL, following observations can be made:

1. During the six (6) month period approximately 28 searches were done. A copy of the computer search was sent to the client (attach #1) and in addition a user survey form (attach #2) and a letter explaining the service (attach #3). Subsequently follow-up letters were sent to those not returning the user survey form (attach #4).

2. Responses from clients have been less than hoped, however; of those who did respond they were very positive as to the benefits of the service and its value.

3. The NATL database was used to respond to a variety of questions (attach #5). In most instances the data base was able to provide information. The data base was used in those situations in which it was determined the client could be better served by information of the program type.

4. The Professional Resource Center-Information Services deals with clients primarily through phone mediation/negotiation. Questions are taken and transferred to a form (attach#6). This form indicates question, name, position, school, and school district. Then, a determination is made as to what appropriate search methodology will be utilized. The client does not necessarily know what strategies will be utilized but he can be assured he will get an appropriate response to his question.

5. The NATL file was demonstrated to some state personnel, curriculum resource consultants (special education), consultants (general education), Project VALUE staff and it became part of the PRC presentation to tour groups who visited and utilized the facility..

6. The number of searches of the NATL database would be signficantly higher if the test period had been during the fall and winter months. The spring and summer months are times when educational facilities are winding down operations.

7. The NATL file is a needed adjunct to the existing databases. This can be determined by an examination of PRC information request forms. People want to know about programs in order to better organize and plan their own projects.

8. The kinds of data our users want, by and large, could not be found in this test file. Because of this factor, it would be an error to judge the validity of the NATL file on its contents. Its contents were limited and, therefore, its use was limited. On the other hand, the NATL file's schemate, its conceptual approach is to be applauded and validated. The potential to select specific programs by a variety of approaches rapidly and specifically has immense promise for information centers such as ourselves. Should the NATL file disappear, the needs would still exist. The information would be retrieved manually at a far greater cost in monies, time, and accuracy.

9. Suggestions for changes are as follows:

    a. Collection of statistical data by submission of machine readable cards.

    b. Training sessions consisting of hands on terminal use and a general overview of the BRS system.

    c. Thesaurus of ERIC terms used in the system.

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CASE STUDY

National Education Practices File
Pilot Test

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Prepared by: Mr. Rod Barth

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II. State Operations, Services and Linkages

III. Practices File Operations

IV. Appendices

I. THE ORGANIZATION

Introduction

The ensuing case study is for the Illinois State Board of Education, one of 14 sites chosen to pilot test the National Education Practices File. The Practices File is searchable online from Bibliographic Retrieval Services through the Illinois Resource and Dissemination Network (IRDN). The IRDN is part of the Local Education Agency Services Department.

Background on Organization

The Illinois Office of Education, known as the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction prior to 1975 and renamed the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) as of October 1, 1979, is a state education agency. Appendices 1-3 elaborate on the origin, history, governance, major functions, staffing, and funding of the Illinois State Board of Education.

Dissemination Services

Employing over 700 staff, ISBE has approximately 100 people involved in dissemination services, including the 75 to 80 Program Services Team (PST) consultants, managers, and secretaries; IRDN staff; and East Central Curriculum Materials Center (ECCMC) staff, which accesses IRDN's data bases to serve a 12-state vocational education region that includes Illinois. While ISBE serves in a regulatory role, the agency has stressed the importance of providing service to local education agencies in recent years. Increasingly the agency is pursuing a leadership orientation with emphasis on service. The dissemination services provided through the Local Education Agency Services Department reflect the State Board's direction. It is this context that IRDN operates and the Practices File is being pilot tested.

II. SITE OPERATIONS, SERVICES AND LINKAGES

Functions

The functions of the IRDN are central to the agency's overall dissemination effort. They also reflect influence of the general functions of State Capacity Building projects, a National Institute of Education (NIE) program which partially funds IRDN. This Federal funding source varies from 5 to 7 percent of the Illinois total dissemination funding. See Appendices 4-6 and 9 for more detail on IRDN functions.

The clients of this site are local education agencies throughout Illinois, serving the state's 2,463,776 pupils. Clients are identified through use of the Illinois Problems Index, PST consultants, and other ISBE staff, e.g., those in Program Planning and Development. Dissemination services available to the local education agencies in 1,012 school districts are aimed at both administrators and practitioners. Monthly usage data indicates 33 to 42 percent of IRDN's clients are administrators.

Services and Linkages

Decisions on which dissemination services to provide result from following a process. The process includes local, regional, and ISBE input. For example, the Illinois Problems Index (IPI) (described in Appendix 7) is one part of the process IRDN uses to determine services/products development. Following are the top 10 of 50 ranked priorities identified by the IPI:

(1) Reading
(2) Communication/Language Skills
(3) Study Skills
(4) Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
(5) Mathematics
(6) Health/Safety/Nutrition
(7) Finance & Staffing
(8) Evaluation of Education Program
(9) Legislature & Revenue
(10) Counseling & Guidance

With the exception of priority 9, IRDN services/products development around these priorities includes newsletters (See Appendix 8), brochures (See Appendix 9), Readi-Reference packets, and searches. IRDN staff also make presentations throughout the state on the identified priorities.

Another means to determine services/products development is the PST consultants, ISBE's change agents who are in constant touch with the locals. Through staff meetings and IRDN liaison meetings, the consultants are polled for input relating to services/products development. Since dissemination services are accessed and delivered to clients via the PST consultants, they provide IRDN--through the communication process just outlined--with a reliable instrument for monitoring the pulse of local needs. PST consultants assist all locals interested in using the IPI.

Further efforts to provide services/products result from monitoring search requests. When a topic is requested frequently in a given time frame--such as nutrition last March and April--it is reviewed for development into a newsletter, Readi-Reference packet, etc.

The crucial point to observe is that services/products are the logical outcome of a carefully planned and coordinated process. Services/products are not the result of dictates by an "expert." The process is client oriented and facilitated by the LEA Services Department. The process also includes access to National Diffusion Network (NDN) programs from the Illinois State Facilitator. These programs are available via searches of the Illinois Resources File and the National Education Practices File (See Section III of this Case Study.) The PST consultants are available to work with any local district attempting to adopt/adapt NDN and other promising practices.

Documentation and Assessment

Documentation of this site is provided of this site in a number of ways. Initially, the quarterly reports were the container for documentation. Cumulatively the quarterly reports provided a temporary means of documentating. Further, documentation of this pilot test site's operations is provided in the annual capacity building renewal proposal written to the National Institute of Education (NIE). The 1979 renewal proposal contains an extensive history of the IRDN. Beyond this, documentation is provided in the form of sample flow-charts and newsletters (See Appendices) as well as written policies of the IEA Services Department.

Assessment information on dissemination services in Illinois exist in several forms. One is the search evaluation form (See Appendix 10) which evaluates the services delivery process. A more thorough going evaluation of the dissemination services effort in Illinois was conducted by the National Testing Service. These evaluations--combined with the feedback processes--are used as indicators of success and directional signs for future efforts.

III. PRACTICES FILE OPERATIONS

Operations

Information from the Practices File is accessed by and delivered to clients via PST consultants. This method of delivering Practices File resources is consistent with the agency's dissemination policy--followed by IRDN--of delivering services through the PST consultants.

The PST consultants serve as the two-way communications link with local education agencies as originally recommended in the IPOD Report. This process works both ways in Illinois in that they not only deliver the Practices File resources, the PST consultants are also the access point for clients to acquire Practices File resources and other information from IRDN. The Practices File operations--both access and delivery--are integrated with all other dissemination services of IRDN (See Appendices 8a and 11).

For example, as a routine matter all requests that require a search are previewed against the Practices File. This does not necessarily mean that the Practices File will be searched, however. To elaborate, "The development of policies and procedures to deal with the event of a teacher strike," was an actual search request. Although it was searched on ERIC and several other data bases, it was not searched on the Practices File because the search dealt with matters of policies and procedures rather than programs and practices.

The IRDN has endeavored to provide the Practices File with the broadest dissemination possible. That is why the Practices File was incorporated with IRDN policies, and that is why IRDN did not choose to disseminate the Practices File under separate procedures and operations. The Practices File is placed in a position to compete as a legitimate data base (and parenthetically to succeed or fail on its own merits).

Problems and Constraints

Operational problems and constraints related to the Practices File were, for the most part, reported in the monthly pilot test site reports. For reference, these reports can be obtained from Bibliographic Retrieval Services, Inc. The problems discussed related primarily to either the site's operations or matters related to Practices File software. These problems were worked out cooperatively between BRS and site staff.

There are, however, several concerns related to the Practices File which are worthy of some detail. These concerns are client responses to the search evaluation form delivered with searches, Practices File contents, and overlap with the Illinois Resources File.

Client responses evaluating searches of the Practices File are as scarce as action in Peoria on Tuesday night, or any other night for that matter. In fact, there is more action at the local Knights of Columbus. Client reluctance to return search evaluation forms of the Practices File is consistent, however. Returns of searches for the past two years is 5% for the entire state. If silence is a gauge of satisfaction, the Practices File is being well received.

To acquire more client data, the PST consultants were asked several months ago to remind clients of the importance of the evaluations, but it will be several more weeks before the responses can be evaluated. It should be noted that evaluation forms of the Practices File may be coming back from clients after the January, 1980 deadline for completing the Practices File project.

The other concern related to the Practices File is the content of the data base. The nature of a "Practices File" implies "practical" resources to the client educator. There is a need to capture and disseminate practices such as those provided by large corporations. For example, Illinois Bell has numerous programs that are available to educators, but educators may not know this (and these are not propaganda brochures either). Beyond these resources, there are the resources of the publishing world--practices too numerous to itemize. These practical resources ought to be included in the Practices File. The practicality and relevance of the Practices File would be increased, thus more nearly approximating the client practitioners needs.

An additional concern that surfaced during the pilot testing was the overlap between the Practices File and the Illinois Resources File. The Illinois Resource File contains a data base of promising programs. For example, the National Diffusion Network (NDN) programs are contained in both data bases. Searchers were in a quandry created by IRDN's dissemination policy and the data base overlap. The solution was to divide the search load between the data bases where there was overlap by alternating the searches for execution on those data bases, by requesting the clients to specify a data base, or by PST consultant selection of the data base.

Benefits

The primary benefit to the IRDN from the availability of the Practices File accrues in the opportunity to provide increased service to Illinois local education agencies. In all candor, it is entirely too early to determine (late October) the benefits which accrue to clients who received information from the Practices File.

Implications

The impact of the availability of the Practices File on IRDN functions varies. For example, the Practices File facilitates building relationships with clients, mainly practitioners; developing the means of selecting resources for responding to queries; sustaining and maintaining service relationships; and identifying clients' needs for information. Because of the size of the Practices File, it still lacks potential to impact on acquisition of information resources which respond to client needs. This last capability requires a larger data base; however, it is probably the least important of the benefits to IRDN if viewed from a short-term perspective. Fostering client response is a priority. On balance, the impact of the Practices File to further IRDN goals is self-evident when it can be said that the Practices File builds IRDN relationships, aids in identifying IRDN client needs, furthers the selection of resources in responding to client requests, and sustains service relationships.

A further implication of the availability of the Practices File concerns human resources. Very frequently, a strong need is sensed by PST consultants to access a human resource in addition to the programmatic resource available from the Practices File. The logical outcome of this expression can be inferred. A human resources file of some magnitude is needed. The operation of the Illinois Human Resources File and its popularity further footnote the experience reported by the PST consultants. This observer believes that wherever there is a programmatic interface, a human resource is called for. The literature of dissemination supports such a view. A human resources file is a logical extension of a Practices File.